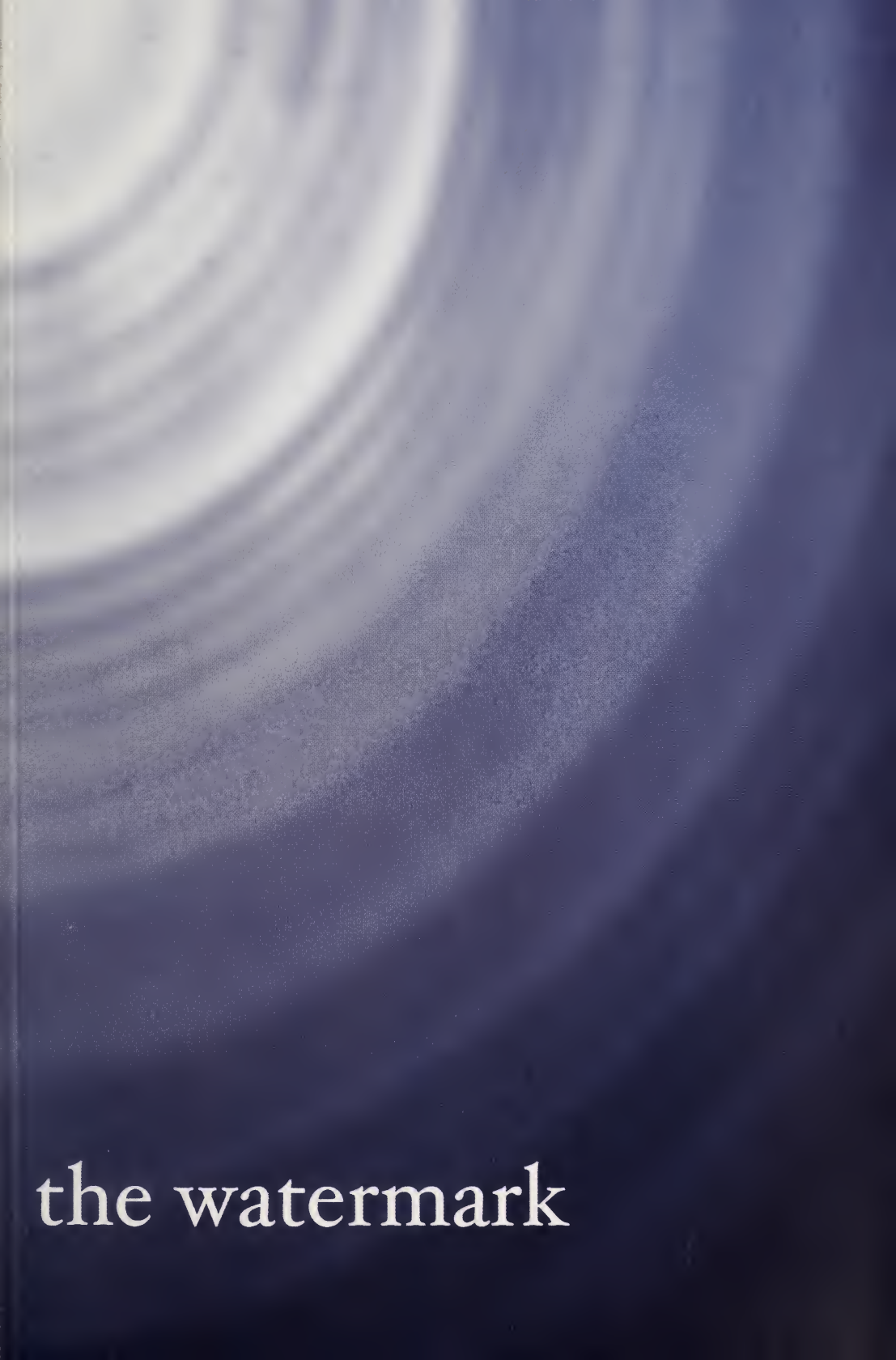
the watermark

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the watermark

volume 9

the watermark

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editor's note

The authors and artists showcased in this volume of *the watermark* demonstrate mastery of language, artistic skill, and imagination. This edition shows the diversity of voices of our graduate and undergraduate students at UMass Boston. I invite you to read *the watermark* with a critical eye and an open mind.

Creating this year's edition of *the watermark* required the assistance of many people. Most significantly, these individuals enabled us to carry on after September 11th. Together we have created something beautiful, a book that depicts life honestly. A newly formed, energetic staff solicited submissions and planned special events in the fall semester. During winter break the original submissions were stolen, motivating us to start over and produce an even better journal. Countless people helped us to accomplish this goal. There are a few people to whom we are particularly indebted.

We thank Donna Neal for preserving the integrity and independence of *the watermark*. We are grateful to Askold Melnyczuk for his inspirational guidance. Our staff thanks Dean Janey and Dean Smith for their support in our time of need. To Joyce Morgan, Diane Murphy, Bob Cole, and the Student Life staff, we appreciate your helpful and patient administrative assistance. We thank the Student Senate and the Graduate Student Assembly for funding *the watermark*. Due to their help, we are able to publish 4,000 copies of the journal annually and distribute them to the campus free of charge. We thank the other student centers on Wheatley's fourth floor for supporting *the watermark*. We would like to thank Billy, our friend from the Wit's End Cafe for providing much needed caffeine and cocoa.

I would like to thank Professor Candice Rowe for cheering me on over the years. I wish to honor Professor Chris Bobel, whose energy and commitment to education drives me to succeed. To Kendra FitzGerald, last year's editor, thank you for your practical wisdom, and friendship. To my colleagues, the members and residents of W-4-177, you made *the watermark* a family and the campus a friendly place to be. To all of the student contributors, our families, and friends, *the watermark* extends appreciation for your encouragement of our creative endeavors.

Teams of qualified editors, readers, and jurors chose selections anonymously and democratically. This edition of *the watermark* has been masterfully edited by student volunteers who spent endless hours making the journal the best quality possible.

Students interested in becoming members of our volunteer staff may contact at any time. Limitless opportunities are available to learn the publishing process and assist projects for the 2002-2003 edition. Call (617) 287-7960 for more information.

—Sarah T. Reddick

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Lorraine Lillian Jones Memorial Prize

Lillian Lorraine Jones was a freshman student at UMass, Boston when she passed away. She discovered her love of writing in Freshman English and hoped to cultivate this interest in creative writing courses. Her mother chose to honor this wish by giving a donation to the Creative Writing Program. The Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize is funded by her gift and awarded by *the watermark* to a student demonstrating an exceptional ability in prose writing.

This year's Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize goes to Nathaniel T. Beyer for his short story "The Importance of Small Things." Congratulations from *the watermark* and the Creative Writing Program.

Nathaniel T. Beyer

The Importance of Small Things

"Fruit Loops?"

Every child in the small, stuffy room raises a hand. By late afternoon, after a long day of school, they're all hungry. Scott Fisher stands in front of the group in a khaki sweater and corduroy pants, tightly curled hair brushing the tops of his shoulders, his moustache immaculately trimmed. He has been at the after-school program at Randall Elementary for almost a year and has learned the importance of small things, like the sample-size box of cereal he holds in his hands. As he peruses the anxious kids, he notices a small pale face looking out of a pea green parka.

"Jimmy. You haven't had a good one in a while." The man tosses the small box over a field of waving hands towards the small boy in the corner. Jimmy catches the box with one hand, drops it, then bends down to retrieve the box from the floor. Brian McGrath, an older boy sitting next to him, reaches down and nabs the box before Jimmy can reach it.

"Hey." The smaller boy scowls at Brian. "Give it back."

The boy clutches the small box in his hand.

"No." Brian turns toward Jimmy, trying to screen his maneuvers from the adult at the front of the room. Jimmy makes a grab for the box. For a moment both boys clutch the box, grappling, the larger boy turning back and forth, using his size like a Sumo wrestler. Then the box bursts, sending a wall of Fruit Loops into the air. Reds, greens, yellows rain down on the other kids like sugar coated sleet.

"Jimmy. Brian. What's going on back there?" Scott calls to them.

"He stole my cereal." Jimmy says, standing, facing his seated adversary.

The man walks around the other kids.

"Brian, didn't you hear me? That's Jimmy's."

Brian looks at the floor.

"Brian, I want you to apologize."

"I'm sorry." Brian whispers to the floor.

"To Jimmy."

"I'm sorry, Jimmy." Brian shoots him a quick glance.

"All right." He turns back to the front of the room. "I know this is getting to be the end of the week, but let's try to rein it in a little."

In the front of the room is a small table with cartons of the miniature cereal boxes on it. He pauses over the remaining boxes.

"Jimmy, Cheerios." He tosses the box; this time the boy catches it. "And for you, Brian, Grape Nuts." He zings the box to the boy.

The gym is an echo chamber of squeaking tennis shoes, shouts, and rubber balls smacking on walls and bodies. The white fluorescent light reflects off every surface. The smell of years of sweat rises up from the cinder blocks and polished wood with a permanence, as if, in a thousand years, after the walls have dissolved into sand, the scent will still remain.

A third grader with a shock of red ruffled hair stands at center court, the ball in his hands, the others darting around him like schools of nervous fish. Away from the group, near the orange double doors that lead from the corridor, Jimmy slouches against the wall. Across the gym, Scott picks him out and watches for a moment through the swirl of the kids' game, then walks around the group toward the boy. Jimmy pretends not to notice his approach, instead staring at the group of screaming children.

"Hey, Jimbo, what's up?" Scott squats down next to him.

"Nothin'." He continues to stare.

"How come you still got your coat on? A little hot, isn't it? I'm sweating like a pig in this sweater." He pulls on the sweater's neck for emphasis.

The two sit for awhile, separate, taking in the game.

"Jimmy, listen... I heard about your teacher. You know, sometimes stuff happens, stuff no one can do anything about, like car accidents."

"Yeah." Jimmy's voice is non-committal, unsure of how to take his words.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

Jimmy shakes his head. They lapse into silence again.

"You know, Jimmy, sometimes when I'm feeling bad, I like to get up and move around, do something, go dancing, something. Just sitting around and thinking about it doesn't do much good sometimes. Maybe you should go play with the other kids."

Jimmy looks down for a moment.

"Okay." He slowly gets to his feet.

"Good. I think it will do you some good to move around a little, take your mind off things." He musses Jimmy's short brown hair. The boy turns and trundles off towards the roiling group of children. He looks like a miniature soldier going to war, Scott thinks, watching him walk away. A smile crosses his face for a moment, then disappears.

Jimmy moves slowly, trying to hide behind the bigger boys. He becomes entranced with the sound of the game, trying to move and listen, to hear exactly when the squeaking shoes and shouts fade, each echo replaced by a new sound, overlapping like waves in a hurricane. For a while he stands behind Peter King, a tubby older boy, whose movements are slow enough that Jimmy can shadow him, and let his mind drift into the sound. The noises take on a syncopation, a schoolboy choir of tennis shoes and voices exploding in the heavy air. Jimmy forgets about the game, protected by the large boy in front of him, enraptured by the sound. It buoys him up, drifting towards the banks of lights on the ceiling. The other children undulate around him.

Brian McGrath grips the ball tightly, zeroing in on the big boy. He looks away for a moment, then raises the ball and fires it off at Peter, almost without looking. His follow through is sweeping, arching, graceful as ballet; the ball rockets through the air, a red blur hissing as it approaches its target. Out of the corner of his eye, Peter sees a red streak coming towards him and ducks. Behind him Jimmy is oblivious, looking up at the lights. He never sees the ball, isn't even aware of its existence, until it flattens his nose and sends a torrent of blood into his mouth.

"We called your mom, but she can't get off early. How about your dad? Do you know his work number? We only have your mom's down."

"He's in Michigan, with Shirley." Jimmy looks up at the cracked white tile in the ceiling above him.

"Oh. Well," he pauses, unsure of how to go on. "You'll have to tough it out until six, okay?" Scott glances down at Jimmy. The boy is holding a bundle of white paper towels held up to his nose, red slowly diffusing into the white.

"Yeah."

"Now let me see once." He reaches down toward Jimmy's nose.

Jimmy moves the wad of paper towels away for a moment. A thin trickle of blood runs from his nostrils.

"Does this hurt?" He touches the bridge of the boy's nose. Jimmy shakes his head slightly.

"How about this?" Scott moves his fingers lightly down Jimmy's nose.

The boy winces; a last tear runs from the corner of his eye and across his temple to his hairline. "A little." He says.

"Well," Scott examines the nose, concern creasing his face. "I don't think it's broken. Just a little bent." He smiles at the boy.

"I have to get back to the other kids. Just relax and lie here. Be sure to keep pressure on it, like this." He cups the boy's small hand and presses down on the side of his nose firmly, but gently.

"'Kay."

"Come and get me if you need anything." He turns around to the sink in the small nurse's office and begins washing his hands. The opaque glass in the door rattles slightly as the door opens. A face appears in the crack of the door, a man's face surrounded by a wreath of fuzzy black hair like the fur of a schnauzer grown to an absurd length. Bruce Johnson, the after school art guy, steps into the room. His blue sweatshirt is streaked with red and yellow paint, jeans faded and dotted with paint; on his feet are canvas sneakers, one robin's egg blue, the other

dark red.

"Hey, Jim, what happened?" He looked at the boy stretched out on the nurse's cot.

"Dodge ball. Brian McGrath caught him in the face, unintentionally. The kid's got an arm like Catfish Hunter." Scott spoke as he dried his hands.

"Man-o-man, Jim, are you OK?" He smiles.

Jimmy nods.

"What have you got the kids doing?" Scott moves toward the door.

"They're painting a picture of their favorite famous person."

"I'll go back and keep an eye on them. Make sure their not painting on each other."

"Thanks, Scott."

Scott closes the door softly behind him. Bruce settles into a small stool at the side of the cot.

"I heard about Ms. Sandoval. I met her once. She seemed like a real nice lady." 11.

"Yeah." Jimmy felt like he was going to cry again. He bit his lip; he didn't want to cry like a little baby in front of Bruce.

"She's my favorite teacher, I mean real teacher, not..." The boy looked at Bruce.

"I know what you mean, don't worry."

"She read us a poem last week, "To Autumn." It was by some English guy. She," Jimmy looked away, "she read it really good."

"I'll bet she did." Bruce looks at the boy thoughtfully. "How's the smeller?"

Jimmy smiles and takes the paper towels away from his nose.

"Looks like the bleeding has stopped. You may live." He looks up at the clock on the wall. "I really should get back to the others. Do you want to come?"

"No, thanks. I'll stay here."

"Okay, but if you change your mind, we're just down the hall in the art room."

Jimmy lies in the quiet; only the faint hum of the lights permeates the air. Occasionally, he can hear the sound of muffled voices from the hall. He stares up at the fluorescent tube shining in its fixture. After a while, the light seems to move in the tube like a snake. He thought maybe it was like a headlight. Maybe that was what Ms. Sandoval saw. Maybe that was the last thing she saw, just the brightness of an approaching headlight. Is she all alone now, wherever she is? Will the worms eat her if she is buried in the ground? Will she get cold? She won't; she can't anymore. Her parents will be sad. She talked about them once, even showed some pictures of where they live in Puerto Rico. They'll have to come all this way, on an airplane, all the time knowing...

A thought occurred to him: what if they take her back with them, to Puerto Rico, and bury her there. There'll be nothing left, nothing left of her, not even a gravestone, no marker, nothing, like she just disappeared, like she never existed at all.

Jimmy rises from the cot.

Out in the hall, the air is still, quiet, rippling only slightly with voices

from the art room. Jimmy approaches the open door cautiously. He doesn't want to go in there, doesn't want to be seen. Invisible. That must be what she is now, he thinks. Just a soul, like in the church his grandparents sometimes take him to. Holy Spirit.

He crosses the doorway quickly, glancing in to make sure nobody sees him. In his mind, she is there with him, holding his hand, talking to him in her quiet voice. He can see her bright red turtleneck, dark hair and woolen skirt. She always complained about the cold, so cold here, so far from her home. Jimmy wonders what it would be like to be so far away, in some strange and different place where people spoke another language, dressed differently, everything different, even the weather. Maybe that's like where she is now, so different. He wants to stay in the school forever, with the warm dusty smell of the radiators, the turrets of the old building like in a fairy tale castle.

He moves quickly up the stairs to the landing. Out the wire-shot window he can see the gray light of October fading out of the sky. No sunset, like in the summer, just a lessening of light so gradual that you don't even notice, as day slips into night. He watches the cars move up the hill, past the chain-link fence of the playground and out of sight.

From above him, a gentle whirring sound brakes the plane of dusty air. He takes the next flight of stairs cautiously, slowly, like a spy. At the far end of the corridor he sees the janitor moving the big humming floor polisher in front of him like a minesweeper. The brown tiles behind him are like glass, reflecting the banks of light on the ceiling. Jimmy slips quickly up the next flight of stairs to the second floor.

Down the hall, past the bulletin board covered with finger painted drawings of animals and houses, he approaches the door of the classroom. For a moment, he worries that it won't be open. He feels the anxiety rise in him, as if there was something in the room, something that he must let out. The knob turns with a faint squeak, and the door rattles open.

The classroom seems different, dim and quiet. He closes the door behind him and walks beside the big chalkboard opposite the window, running his fingers along the chalk well. He looks at his fingertips covered in white dust. He rubs them together and watches the dust float down on the unseen eddies. Dust, he thinks, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the preacher said at his uncle's funeral. He hadn't understood it, but it had seemed important, like some great secret was locked in its repeated words. Maybe the dust was from a piece of chalk that Ms. Sandoval had used, her hand wrapped around it, running it lightly over the board in great circular O's or looping L's. He looks at the small rivers of dust in the silver chalk well, pinches together a small pile and tries to put it in his pocket. The dust only spreads into a white puff on his jeans. He frowns.

The room is mostly shadow now, the light from the window like a painting, stopping at the frame. He doesn't want any light now; he knows the room well enough. At the front of the room, in front of another black chalkboard, is her desk. He opens the top drawer and looks at the pens in the narrow compartment. He picks up a black ballpoint pen, its clear shaft revealing the column of dark ink inside. How did she hold the pen, he wonders. Gently, in the crook of her thumb, guiding the ink across the page.

He puts the pen down. It doesn't matter now. He feels sad. The room is dark. In the other drawers are only various papers, indistinguishable in the failing light. He opens the bottom drawer and sees something glimmering in the dimness. It is soft, furry, like a kitten. He holds it up to his face. The delicate scent of her hair rises to him, the scent that he would breathe when he sat next to her at her desk, the fresh coolness of her coming inside after recess, her black velvet hair cascading out of her pink beret like a waterfall. The pink beret. He holds it to his face and breathes her in. She stands again, in front of the class, holding the big book. Her red lips open, her brown skin, flashing white teeth, lingering over the words 'hour' and 'o'erbrimmed,' voice a caress.

The boy stands behind the desk, inhaling with his eyes closed. Outside, the darkness is almost complete. Cars slide by, their headlights cutting through the mist, gliding into nameless windswept streets. In another moment, the streetlights will come on, the cars will be gone, rain will begin to fall, and the boy will leave the room. But for now, there is only this: breath, rising and falling in twilight.

Tim Calvin

Invitations

14.

sideways shows a
curve to your back
looking back at me
shy glances from between

a fragile shirt and belt
subtle shifts in cotton layers
an invitation or indifference
a thoughtless motion evolving

so I set right the many layers
smooth with simple strokes
a hushed but misplaced word
a stutter I leave unfinished

15.

Self Portrait No. 1
digital imaging
Kate Sheridan

Albert Whitaker III

Childhood Remembrance

16.

The sky began to cloud and darken as the day progressed. Sweet aromas of fresh collards, cornbread, fried chicken, and the candy-coated pungent odor of "sweet la-la" snuff permeated grandma's house. I used to think that people who lived below the Mason-Dixon Line had brown spit. It took awhile for me to realize that the brown spit was a result of "dipping snuff," or chewing tobacco.

"Y'all children better git those chores done fo' dinner!" grandma would shout.

My siblings and I would perform our chores with diligence. We knew that dinner was going to be well worth the task of doing chores. I always wanted to set the table. It was there that I could watch grandma cook and share stories about my life in the north and hers in the south. There was a certain calmness and tranquility when my grandmother was preparing a meal. She softly hummed music we had heard at the previous Sunday morning worship service at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. You could hear the sizzle of fat-back, the fatty portion of the hog, and chopped onions as they cooked on the hot stove.

"So, how y'all like being here in North Carolina with your grandma?"

"I love it down here," was my reply.

"That's good," she said, "because this is where your family comes from, your mama and daddy both were raised here."

As she added the hot stock to the pot of fat-back and chopped onions, she shouted out to my brothers and sisters, "How dem chores comin'?"

"Almost through," they would respond.

"Well, hurry up, the food is jus' 'bout done. I knows how y'all kids love to eat my food."

"Everything you cook is good, except that 'blood pudding' you love to make on occasion," I replied.

"Whatya mean boy? Yo mama and daddy both were raised on blood pudding. Tha' a lot o' folk don' have nuttin' to eat at all. Y'all ought a be grateful yo got food on yo table to eat."

After the chores were finished we were allowed to go out and play with the kids in the neighborhood. They would tease us about the way we spoke.

"Y'all talk prop talk."

It took a while to understand that "prop talk" meant speaking without a southern accent. Prop talk also meant that we northerners used "proper English." Nonetheless, as the day wore we began to understand one another and lavish in the reverie of being children.

The sky continued to get murky and dark. Grandma yelled from the front porch, "Y'all better git on in the house, it looks like rain! Look a dem clouds o'er yonder. It's a might dark, reckon? Rains a coming, I smell it," she continued. I could smell the rain too. You know, that crisp, clean, indescribable aroma of freshness coupled with the heavy, husky, humidity of the summer heat.

"We could use some rain today, it has been so dry this week," I replied.

"You is sure right," grandma said. "My garden don't look as good as last summer. Well, git in the house so we can eat."

The table was set with an abundance of food. It looked like a huge buffet for hundreds of people.

"Wash dem hands, all a y'all, and come on to the table."

We washed our hands quickly and without detail. My mother would tease us sometimes when we washed our hands without attention to what we were doing.

She would say, "You wash your hands like a whore takes a bath."

After we finished the ritual of taking a "whore's bath" we went to the table for dinner. The smells of the fresh food alone were enough to fill you up.

"Say da grace, Kim, so we can eat," Grandma directed.

As my sister began to say the grace, you could hear the thunder and lightning in the background. I was half-heartedly listening to my sister's prayers. I was hungry and could not wait to sink my teeth into the wonderful meal that lay before me. I vaguely heard my sister say "Amen." I lifted my fork to dive into the huge pile of collard greens. The thunder and lightning continued to crack their whip with a vengeance. All of a sudden, grandma commanded us to get up from the table.

"What's the matter?" I shouted.

"Git up, git up an go sit down! Shut off the 'lectricity," she demanded. "God is doin' his work and we gotta be still."

I wondered, what kind of work was God doing to prevent me from eating that wonderful spread that was getting cold in the kitchen.

Watching and Waiting
black and white photography
John P. Flynn

Jack
black and white photography
Justin Hughes

Frances Murphy Araujo

The Healing

20.

My daughter Monica is helping me with my jacket. She tugs up the collar and fastens the buttons.

"I dreamt of the geese again last night, " I tell her. "I don't know why I dream of them so often. Maybe it's because I see them every day in the field, after the kids have gone."

Monica concentrates on her task. She has a nervous, determined manner, combined with a flighty sort of beauty. Her dark hair falls over her eyes and she juts out her lower lip and blows the air up impatiently.

"In the dream, I flew with them. Over my old house on Parnell Street where my mother and father lived. Over the pulley clothesline on the second floor with my father's green city work shirts waving in the breeze. All in a row. I was dizzy when I woke up this morning."

Monica does the last button and meets my eyes finally, her frank gaze glancing off me like light. "Too much dreaming, Mama. We have to hurry now. Lafayette's meeting us out front."

We pass through the living room where Joe has closed the shades. The television is oddly quiet for a long moment until I see what he's watching. It's an operation of some sort. Red, glistening tissue is stretched back with shiny metal tongs. Two pairs of pale-gloved hands fish around in the bloody open wound and expose the heart, a fist of beating muscle. The narrator finally speaks again, low, as if the operation is a secret.

Joe sips a can of Coors. A cigarette burns in the ashtray stand and I move my gaze quickly over the wreath of burn spots on the carpet around the ashtray. As we pass he swings his big head toward us and looks at us with dead eyes. "Where the hell do you think you're going?" he asks. He's looking at Monica.

"We're going to knock off a couple of liquor stores, Dad, and then we're going to crash a rock concert." Monica's sarcasm never helps the situation. I put my hand on her wrist. She's small boned, and my fingers wrap right around it.

"We're going to church, Joe," I tell him. "There's a TV dinner on the stove. We won't be late."

Since I have been sick, I am aware of the narrow passage left of time. Certain fights are pointless. I am fifty and Doctor Love has told me that it is best

to get my affairs in order. "It would be nice to have even one to get in order," I told her, making a foolish joke, and grateful that she smiled sympathetically.

"And it's best to have a hopeful heart," she added. "Try to keep a balance."

It was only when I became aware of the time remaining that I began to think of the things I had expected to happen to me. I had thought I would be a grandmother, and that I would locate my cousin Celeste, with the dark braids on her head, who ran away as a teenager and was never seen by our family again. I wanted to get the attic cleaned and to take a photography class. I wanted to see Monica safe and married.

When we get downstairs, it is nearly dusk. The light is fading, the sky is pearly, and the air has that warning of winter. Lafayette is leaning against his tow truck parked at the curb. His long black hair is shiny and pulled into a ponytail. He is dressed in clean jeans, a blue shirt, and a purple tie. His black cotton jacket says *Lafayette* in a circle on the front. He stubs out a cigarette and sticks the filter in his pocket. He smiles at us, kisses me on the cheek. "Hi, Ellie," he says. His eyes rest on Monica and something softens in them. "Hi, Monica," he says. He has loved her, I think, since they were children, playing in this neighborhood together.

Lafayette helps me into the front seat of the truck. "Upsy daisy," he says sounding quaint for a man his age. He smells like cigarettes and soap.

"How come you're all dressed up?" Monica asks him. She gets in the driver's side and slides into the middle of the seat.

"It's church, isn't it?" Lafayette asks.

"People don't dress up anymore," Monica answers. "It's old-fashioned. Besides, this is a healing service. It's not like regular church."

Monica has planned this trip to Saint Cecelia's, to the healing service she read about in the Herald, for a couple of weeks. The healer priest, named Koblonski, originally from Poland, has traveled throughout Canada and the United States performing miracles. I have no need of miracles now, but Monica, who is only twenty, barely out of girlhood, does.

The last eighteen months has been a time of watching things slide out of my hands. It was when I lost all my hair, when it fell out in handfuls, sad dry heaps, lacking warmth, separated from me forever, that I began to understand the sliding nature of things, and that small understanding itself became an odd comfort. When I became too tired to sweep the kitchen floor, I had to give that up. My husband Joe has honestly believed all of his life that women are inferior to men, and that it is women's place to serve them. In some odd way, perhaps I believed it too. Or maybe I just accepted the notion because it was too hard to fight with Joe. Now, as I can no longer take care of him, he is lost and angry. His cruelty is like a hollow rattling. It means little to me. I think now, that I should have fought for myself. Maybe it would have been better for Monica if I did. At this point, too late for regret, I wonder what the purpose of my life is. I ask myself this daily and answer myself daily. Tonight, my purpose is to attend this healing service with my daughter who needs me to go.

Saint Cecelia's is a tall brick building with complicated spires and a few missing tiles.

"Get as close as you can," Monica says, eyeing the curb in front. "She can't walk that far." I forgive her for a calling me "she," although it surprises me that it stings a little. In the last two years, she has taken care of me by herself, for the most part, and it is a task that has robbed her of any lightness she might have hoped for.

Lafayette pulls into a handicapped spot.

"You can't park here," Monica says.

"What are they going to do, tow me?" Lafayette asks. He thinks this is funny and laughs. He jumps out and comes around to help me out. He is still smiling, patient and gentle as he half lifts me down.

Monica looks disapprovingly, glancing around as if looking for a policeman. She links her arm in mine and we head toward the set of stairs going up to the church when I hear the sound. I look up and see them cross-stitched across the sky, a noisy, wavery V.

"Look," I say, and point up. Monica and Lafayette stand still and look up.

"Canadian geese," I tell them. "They're flying south. It's time. I've heard them for a couple of weeks now. They sound excited. Everyday more are leaving." We watch as the v-shaped line trembles closer until they are directly above us. There is a mighty sound, wings beating against air, like breath going in and out with great effort, and hoarse cries and honks. As we watch the line, one goose from a wing of the V, flaps hard to move up to the point position, and the leader falls back.

"My God, did you see that? That's how they do it. They fly in this V formation to save their strength, and as the lead goose gets tired, another takes his place. I read about this, but I have never seen it." I feel enormous gratitude.

"Awesome," Lafayette says. "I could see their feet, tucked up there. Did you hear all that honking?"

"They're encouraging each other," I tell him. "They have all this hard work to do, to fly south. They need to stick together to accomplish this. It is something, isn't it?"

"Well, it's just a natural thing," Monica says. "It's not as if it hasn't been happening all these years, since the beginning of time. And we're almost late. It's five now." Just as she speaks the bells of the church peal, sending five long, clanging vibrations into the evening air. There is something beautiful and dangerous about the sound; it is a kind of warning, or calling, and I imagine this church has been ringing out the passing of time for many years. In the thickening evening, on the street, almost all the cars have their headlights on. They stop and start, red lights winking, headed for home.

We make our way over the sidewalk, up the granite steps of the church, and through the heavy oaken doors. Inside, it's dim. The ceiling reaches toward heaven in naves. The stained glass windows are dark. The front of the altar shines, white marble lit with many candles. Cylindrical lights on long chains hang over the altar. The smell of incense and burning candle wax mixes with perfume, the heat coming up, and wool.

There is a general movement in the church, as if people are restless. Monica leads us down the aisle, close to the front. She gets to the pew first, gestures Lafayette in, and goes in next, putting me on the aisle side. I straighten my

collar and touch my hair as I look around. My hair, short, thin, and wavy now, a rather ordinary fawn color, not the dark rich brown that was mine, still feels strange. It's been some time since I've been to church. Joe and I were married in Saint Agatha's where he was once an altar boy. I remember that when we stood outside the church in our wedding clothes, Joe in his new charcoal suit and me in my powder blue empire waist dress, the wind gusted suddenly, shaking the pear trees in bloom and showered us with white petals. We laughed and with my white gloves I carefully dusted the petals off Joe's shoulders.

In the back of the church, in the loft, the choir is already singing. "Be not afraid," they sing, "for I am with you." A dark-haired man plays the organ, his hands flying energetically, the music swelling and rolling. Around me, the people kneel or sit. Some are whispering to each other. Some are quiet, with eyes closed. Lafayette and Monica kneel. I sit back on the seat. Monica's head is bowed. Her hair divides at the nape of her neck exposing it. I wonder what will become of her and I realize that I will not live long enough to find out. My illness is not easy for her. She has developed into a caretaker, and is rather ruthless at it. She and Joe are at great odds, and her brother Tommy, with his karate school and angling, kung fu chopping hands, is little help. She'll need to break away from Joe after I'm gone. Two weeks ago, she told me there was a new position of assistant manager opening up at her workplace. She would make more money and have the experience of traveling to other stores. Last week, in a move that once would have surprised me, I called her boss and told him I thought she should have the job. I told him she was capable. He muttered something about her barely finishing her probation period. "She needs the job," I told him. "She needs it and she needs you to have confidence in her. You won't be sorry. I want you to promise me," I told him, "I want you to promise me you'll give her the chance."

He did.

My own mother died when I was ten, so I understand what it's like to grow up without a mother. After I married Joe and I had two children and saw how things were, I prayed that I would live long enough to see them grown up. I have. My prayer was answered. And now I feel that tiny embarrassing impulse of another prayer: Please, just a little more time, please.

There is a stir as the entourage of altar boys and priests file onto the altar. The one who must be Koblonski is last. He is well over six feet tall, and has silvery hair combed back in a severe way. His vestments are the color of ice. He raises his arms and hands in a large sweeping gesture. He holds his hands out and spreads his fingers. His gaze travels over us, slowly. Finally he turns his eyes to the ceiling of the church and begins talking to God, praying for us, praying for us to be forgiven for our sins. Praying for a cleansing of our minds and bodies. Praying for a renewal of our spirits.

Then with a movement that is charged and graceful, he descends the carpeted steps of the altar to the wide center aisle of the church, followed by the line of boys and men in white vestments. He stops at the pews on each side. A young couple lifts their child to him—a toddler with a bulbous red and purple tumor-like growth on her forehead. The priest glares hard at the baby, his dark eyebrow an angry line across his forehead. He blesses the baby and places his hands on her small shoulders and closes his eyes and tips his head back and prays quietly. The

baby looks up at the priest and looks at his hand on her shoulder, then looks at her parents. Her face wrinkles into a frown and she begins to wail. The parents watch the baby's face. They are calm. Their own faces are young and serious. The priest dips his thumb in a small gold saucer the altar boy holds and makes a sign of the cross on the left side of baby's forehead, where there is no tumor, but a patch of white stretched skin.

The priest moves to a small bearded man in the pew across from us, a man dressed in black baggy clothes that seem too big for his constantly moving, writhing body. The priest whispers to him and the man speaks back in a voice that is loud and uneven.

"Palsy!" he shouts. "And a restless heart!"

Koblonski lays both hands on the man's head, and shakes it violently. The man dips his head and rolls his eyes. His mouth is open.

The priest sweeps across the aisle to us. Another priest, a short chubby man with small soft hands standing behind Koblonski, is holding a big gold crucifix. The two gravely faced altar boys hold bronze bowls and chalices. One of them has a small piece of linen folded over his arm. As I look down, I can see his worn sneakers. A toe is repaired with duct tape. Koblonski's eyes rake over us and fasten onto my face. He bends low and whispers in my ear. His breath is warm. I can smell oil on his hair.

"What is your trouble?" His voice is heavily accented and urgent.

The question is ordinary, and I'm surprised. "Female troubles," I whisper, feeling suddenly ashamed and awkward with the language connected to an illness that has become the focus of my recent life. "Cancer," I whisper again, an explanation. I feel Monica's arm against mine as she presses closer to me.

Koblonski puts one hand on my shoulder and one on my lower belly. With one hand, he grips my shoulder; his other hand spreads over my belly. There is a remarkable heat coming from his long fingers and the palms. I feel my belly soften and worry that I may start to bleed more than the pads I wear can contain. Koblonski throws back his head and his jaw sharpens. I see the sharp angle of his Adam's apple moving in his throat, the nicks from his razor. My legs feel unsteady. Monica puts her hand under my elbow.

He talks about sin, the washing away, the darkness. His voice is commanding and angry. He looks down at me and his face is long and severe. The lines around his mouth are carved deep. His blazing eyes meet mine and I feel afraid to look at him. I close my eyes and sway and lean into him. My forehead touches the silvery white vestment of his shoulder. He takes the hand from my belly and draws me in closer, holding me in an embrace that is strangely intimate. "Go, and sin no more," he says in a voice that rolls out like the tide. Suddenly, I sense an urgent change of energy, clean and cool, and I open my eyes to see Monica draw back one fist and then the other, and in the fashion of a double fisted volleyball serve she punches one golden bowl of oil and then the other high into the air, the candle light reflecting in their spinning surfaces.

"Hands off, Father," she says quietly.

For a moment, I'm not sure what happened. The bowls clatter to the floor. I see the naked look on the face of the duct tape sneaker boy as he looks at Monica with a sparked interest and then turns to the priest for direction. In a moment,

Lafayette and Monica are hustling me out of the pew. We push past the little crowd of men and boys in vestments. The chubby priest bends to pick up the bowls and I think I hear a soft grunt. The faces of the people in church, each as unique as a thumbprint, are unmoved. Each of us have our own battle, I think, looking at the faces, narrow with sadness, boredom, or smiling and quivering in a private ecstasy. The organ music surges around our ears and seems to carry us out of the church.

Outside, it has become dark. The air is cool and crisp. The church rises in a dark silhouette against the sky. The stained glass windows are bright, lit from within, and show the images of saints beheaded and burned and stabbed. We move toward Lafayette's truck without speaking. Lafayette helps me in and Monica slides into the middle. As soon as Lafayette gets in, he turns on the radio. The music is soft. The dashboard dials are lit red. After a couple of blocks Lafayette turns on the heat. It comes up warm against my legs. I can feel Monica and Lafayette beside me, breathing. They smell young, like shampoo and some other good smell, like fresh bread.

"I'm sorry," Monica says.

"Hey," Lafayette says. I see him take Monica's hand beside him and see her pull it away.

"It was all the talk about sin," Monica says. "I couldn't stand that."

"Oh, well, I have sins," I say.

"Like what? Playing Bingo too often to get away from Dad?" Her voice is indignant, and even as I'm surprised at her naming it so precisely, I think yes, that was a sin, leaving you and Tommy on those evenings. Sitting in Bingo halls to escape the heaviness of our life in that apartment. Abandoning you. Yes.

"That was one," I say.

"That guy is crazy. Did you see his eyes? I hated him."

"Well, at least you called him 'Father.' Right after you punched those sacramental golden bowls into the atmosphere. I thought that showed you were brought up properly." Lafayette is smiling in the dark.

We are at the traffic light in the intersection of Morton and Blue Hill Avenue when I see the man with the hat. It's a woolen watch hat, stretched over his wild matted hair. He files down between the cars stopped at the red light, both hands out, his gait curiously choppy, a small smile on his face.

"There he is," I say. "I see him all the time at these intersections." I fumble for my purse, roll down my window.

"Ma," Monica says.

"Sir," I call to him and then press the folded dollar bill into his extended hand. He makes eye contact and I see that his eyes are a golden brown, with lights in them. His brown face is smooth and soft. He says nothing but takes my hand in both of his and bends to kiss it.

"Oh, my God," I hear Monica murmur.

The light changes and the traffic inches forward. The man returns to his spot on the median strip to wait for the next red light and the waiting cars.

"He'll probably just use that for booze or something," Monica says. "They come around the stores and go through the trash."

"He gave me everything," I say, understanding only as I say it aloud. "I

gave him a dollar, and he gave me everything he had."

As we pull up in front of the house, Lafayette says, "It's still early. We could get a bite at the Blue Star. It's open 'til nine."

"I want to go home," I tell him. "You and Monica go. I want to go to bed."

"I'll help you, Ma," Monica says.

"Wait for her," I tell Lafayette.

"I'll wait," he says. He whispers it in my ear when he lifts me down from the truck. "I'm going to wait for her, Ellie." He embraces me on the sidewalk and holds me for a long moment. I feel the length and strength of his young body.

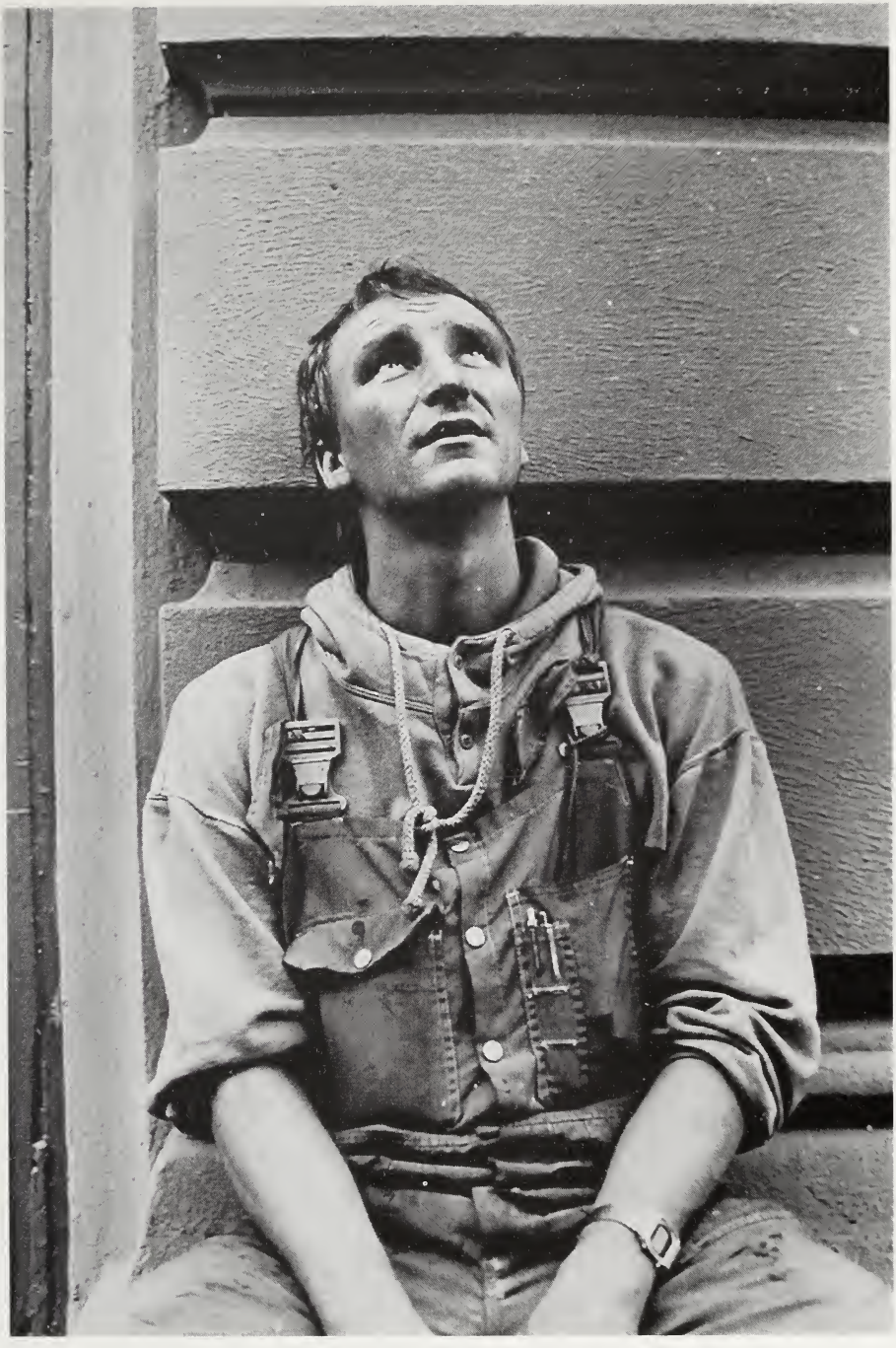
Monica and I pass Joe asleep in the chair in the living room. Monica turns down the TV as she walks by. She helps me out of my clothes and into my flannel nightgown. I brush my teeth and wash my face and touch the place on my hand where the street man kissed it.

Monica opens the window slightly, as I like it. The maple that grows outside my bedroom window moves as if in greeting. I have watched the tree change from season to season. It is familiar and good. Monica kisses me on the cheek and I place my hand on her beloved young face. She squirms slightly.

"Good night, Ma," she says. "I won't be late."

"I love you," I tell her.

She closes the door gently and I'm alone in the dark. I think about my life, my children, my husband, and the life I have had, and what is to come.



27.

Lord's Prayer
black and white photography
John P. Flynn

28.

Stairwell
black and white photography
Kate Sheridan

Evan Sicuranza

Opiate

A curious slant of light
arrives at four p.m.

a cataract in the window pane

weak tea light
with white milk fingers
spilling on the bed

the sense of light, distilled by silence

the walls have arteries
coldly illumined

the bed is stale
the body forgets
light catches in the throat

the eye retracts behind the lid

between the light and dark
the light has this:

hard hands, surface tension

Jeremy J. Walsh

Rubber Soul

30.

Adam could tell a lot about a person by the type of shoes he wore. From his perspective, that's all he saw for most of the day: pairs of shoes attached to the bottoms of legs walking by. Sometimes he would see up to a thousand pairs of shoes in a day. Adam had seen just about every type of shoe out there—from fancy wingtips to simple flats. He had seen shoes with five or six inches heels—and not just on women. Adam saw every type of imaginable boot from combat to cowboy. He'd seen boots that glowed in the dark, making it appear as though the invisible man stepped in radioactive material. He'd seen sneakers that blinked and flashed, and sandals with exposed toes covered in rings or tattoos.

As he thought about this, he noticed a pair of men's shoes approach him. This was the most common shoe he saw during the day. Not worth my time, he thought to himself. Those kinds of shoes never stop. It wasn't the actual kind of shoe that made him think that way; the shoes were simple in design and black in color. It was the condition they were in that made him detest them. The shininess of these shoes glared at him as if to warn him off and protect their owner from him. Shininess usually meant that shoes were important to the person. He thought the owner of these shoes probably cleaned and polished them every night before retiring them to the closet.

"I'll bet they're placed on some sort of shoe pedestal," he mumbled to himself, "high above the other shoes in the closet, as if to remind the other shoes that this pair is the most important pair." Important people always kept their shoes shiny, he thought. Nothing was more important in their world than themselves, and I certainly don't exist in it.

Only once did a pair of shiny men's shoes stop for Adam, and it actually turned out to be very rewarding. It was worth the pathetic words of encouragement he received as part of his gift. "Get yourself some help," said the owner of the shoes and placed his hand on Adam's before departing. It was this memory that encouraged Adam to speak up as the glaring shoes approached.

"Spare change?" Adam recited to the shoes, holding up a small tin can that once contained tomato soup. He shook the tin can gently to let the shoes know that other shoes and their occupants have heard him. But the shiny shoes ignored this request and walked by without paying any notice to him. "Spare

change for the homeless?" Adam repeated.

Sometimes the shoes needed a second chance, but these shoes didn't take advantage of this opportunity. Adam half chuckled, half cursed under his breath as the shoes turned the corner onto Spencer Street.

"I knew it," he said to himself, "never the shiny ones. I don't know why I bother." But actually he did know. If Adam didn't ask, he might miss an opportunity of a lifetime. He had heard the stories on the street, legendary stories where someone was given a hundred bucks or a watch or something valuable. In fact, his street friend Cokey, who only collected Coke cans and never Pepsi, told him once of a guy who was given the "gift of all gifts." According to Cokey, this guy was on the corner of Willshire and Rose when a pair of beautiful black, open toed, high-heeled shoes with glitter on the straps came towards him. The shoes passed him without notice, but he gave them a second chance. Just then the shoes stopped, turned around and approached him. To his surprise the owner dropped something into his cup, then walked abruptly away. The noise and weight of this item drew immediate curiosity. As he peered into his paper cup, he heard those beautiful shoes say, "Cheating bastard," and to his delight, he found among the pennies and dimes a ring with a diamond on it the size of Rhode Island.

Adam was used to being ignored. It came with the job. That's what he called it, "the job." Adam considered himself self-employed. He got up early in the morning, just like everyone else, unless of course, he felt like sleeping in, which he did on occasion since he didn't have to answer to anyone. Each morning he made his way to one of his many offices, which were mostly located downtown, although he did have an office near the park in the garment district. Sometimes he would go to the office on Hudson and Fifth, sometimes to the one on Juniper and Stone. He always had the corner office, or rather his office was on the corner, and he had great views of the city streets.

One afternoon, Adam was working on the corner of Kingston and Hill Street not doing very good business at all when a small pair of pink sneakers with yellow and blue shoelaces stopped in front of him. As Adam looked up he noticed the owner of these shoes was a young girl of about ten or eleven. She wore little white socks fringed with lace and a pink dress with blue and yellow flowers. Her soft blonde hair sprouted out of her head in the form of two pigtails held in place with blue and yellow ribbons. She was smiling at Adam.

"Hello," said the little girl in a soft voice.

Adam just sat there motionless, staring back at the little girl.

"I see you here every time we come downtown, me and mom," she said. "I always wonder what you are doing just sitting here."

"Working," said Adam abruptly.

"Well, you must work pretty hard, cuz you're always here," she said. "What's your name? Mom says you don't have a name, but I don't believe that, everyone has a name".

"Of course I have a name. It's Adam."

"Hello Adam, I'm Katie," and she held out her hand to shake his.

Adam stared at her hand. It was so small and clean. There were tiny fingernails on the tips of tiny fingers. She wore a gold bracelet with tiny gold charms dangling from it.

"What do you want?" said Adam, realizing he was just staring at her hand and not saying or doing anything. "Why don't you run along now little girl?"

"I just couldn't believe you didn't have a name, so I came over here to find out, that's all," she said with a smile. She started to walk away but suddenly she stopped. "Oh, I almost forgot," she said snapping her fingers to herself. Katie turned around and lowered herself to the street level. She held out her hand over the tin can; the charms jingled against the can as she dropped a couple of coins into it. "I found these at school," she said, "I thought you might like them." Katie then stood up walked away.

Adam watched her disappear into the crowd as she made her way down the sidewalk. He sat there quietly for many minutes afterwards, ignoring the shoes as they walked by.

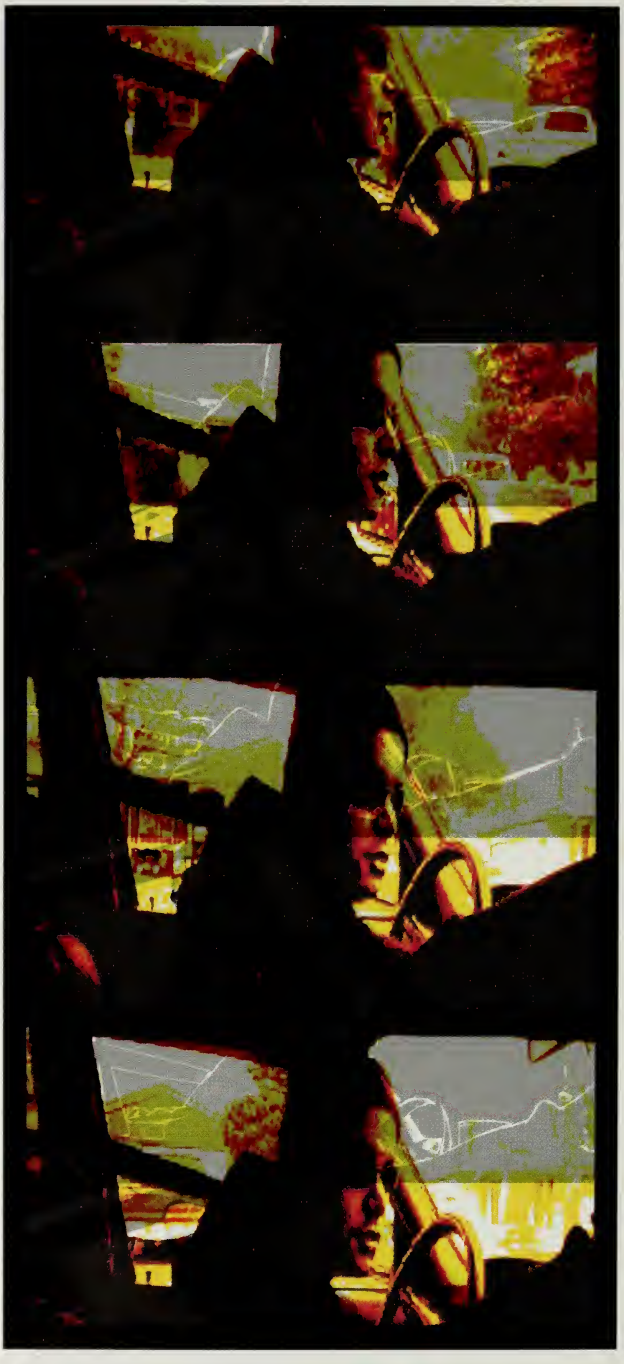
33·

Tough Streets Are Honest Streets
acrylic
Ben Merris

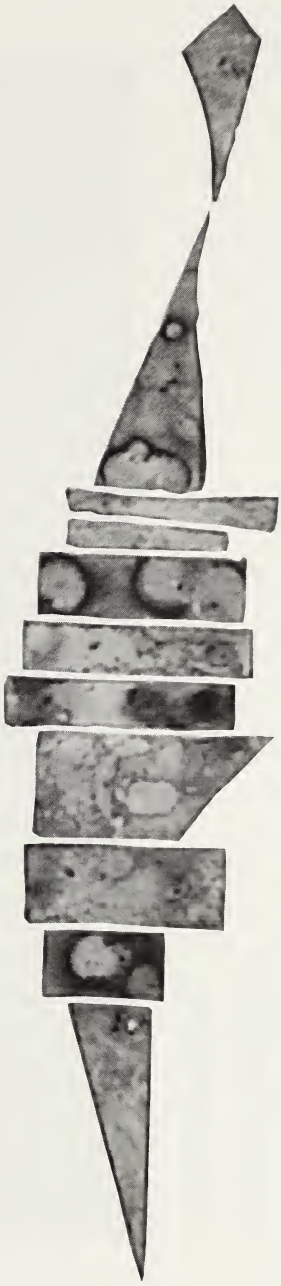
Random Air Burst Twelve Years After the Initial Exchange
digital photography
David A. Hammond

Greenhouse
charcoal
Mari Seki

36.

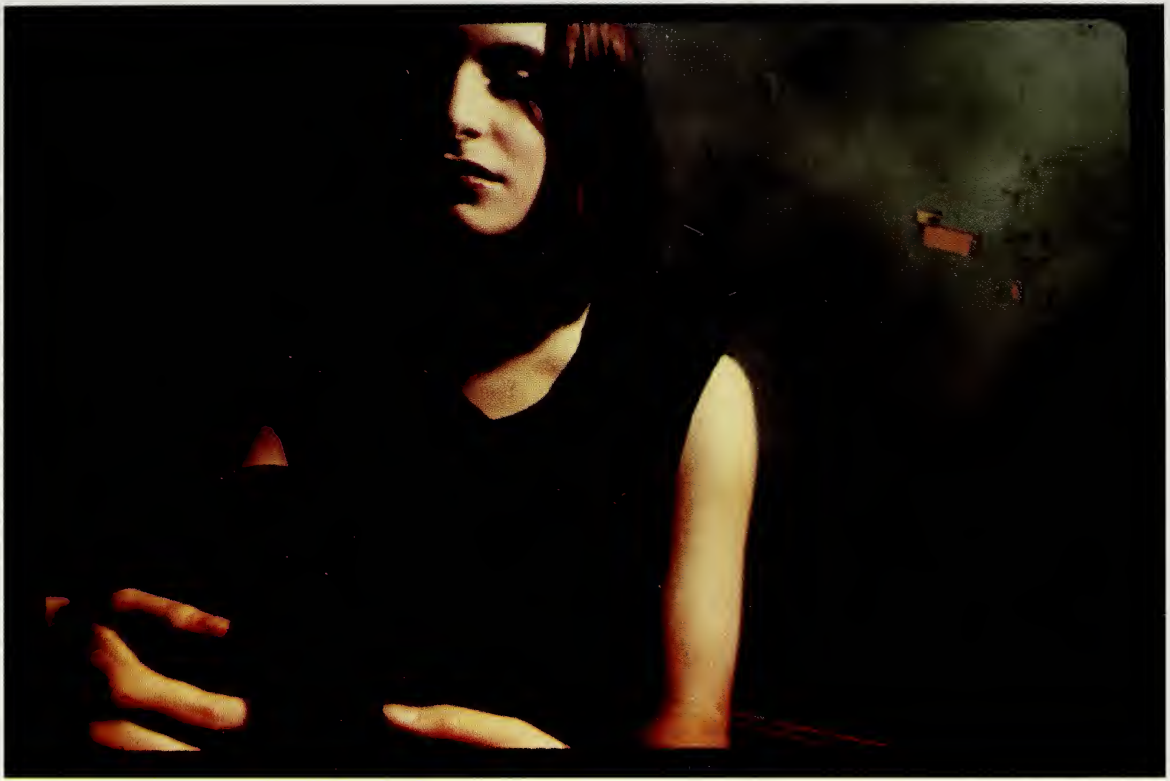


Justin
digital imaging
Azusa Okada



no chi male
printmaking
Phil Nerboso

Marguerite No. 1
digital imaging
Kate Sheridan



Jessie No. 3
color photography
Kate Sheridan

Walden

color photography

Mary Elizabeth Lennon

Michelle Portman

Doing It

We were between the cabin at the top of the hill and the mess hall, and sitting on a spread blue and black plaid blanket. I lay down, stretched out, and stared up at the Oregon sky, dotted as usual, with puffs of clouds floating past like little white sheep, following along in a herd across a blue plain. Lauren, my younger sister, sat next to me, leafing through an outdated *Seventeen* magazine that was left by one of the campers. My older brother, David, hopped about impatiently looking for something to do. He threw a Frisbee as far as he could out over the grassy incline that lead downward to the deep blue water of Devil's Lake.

My mother sent us to sleepover camp every summer. This time she sent us for the whole summer because she and Daddy had gone to Europe for most of it. There were three, three-week sessions offered and since Camp B'nai B'rith was located in Neotsu, Oregon, and we lived in San Jose, California, my siblings and I spent nine weeks at the camp with no break, no parental visits, and in the constant company of other campers and counselors. We spent the day between sessions with counselors waiting for the new group of campers to arrive.

Two of the counselors, Barb and Randy, were boyfriend and girlfriend. Randy, tall, big, hairy, and unkempt, appeared twice as large and overweight as he really was, due to his burgeoning beer belly. There was a lot of that drink going around between sessions or whenever there were officially no campers on the grounds. David, Lauren, and I were privy to all those occasions that summer. Like the 4th of July celebration at Pacific City Beach the night before all campers arrived before the second session.

It had been an eye-opener. Then and there, at eight years old, I had my first bottle of beer. I was persuaded to try the strong liquid by one of the counselors. Barb was almost as big as Randy. She looked as one would imagine his female version to be. She had straight, long hair, dark and parted in the middle over her forehead. Her nose was sharp and under it she had slightly protruding teeth. As she sat on the edge of the blanket that afternoon, braiding a key chain lanyard for Randy, rolls of fat poked out over the top of her jeans and spread her tie-dye T-shirt like a cloak. Her hefty, size D chest rattled as she laughed at Randy's jokes. Skylar and Jeff were joking around too.

Skylar had been my counselor during the previous session. She was of

medium build, somewhat voluptuous, with a solid, bronze tan that matched her dirty brown hair. She always wore a baseball cap backwards, and tight, clingy tank tops or halters that ended a few inches above her bell bottomed jeans or cut offs. Today she wore a bright yellow halter with a large sun embroidered on it. She kept shifting her long hair around her shoulders and across her back, trying to get Jeff's attention while lying on her stomach, perched on elbows and making a daisy chain.

Jeff, my brother's counselor for the last session, was intent on finding a particular song on the Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young cassette in the tape player next to the blanket. He buckled over the small appliance; his slight body appeared energetic and limber. Grooming his long sideburns seemed to be an automatic, nervous reflex that continued even while he fidgeted with the cassette. While running the tape forward and back, he flashed intermittent glances at Skylar's flowing hair and smooth back.

"Hey, you want a massage?" he offered as he finally pressed the play button.

"Yeah, sure. That would be great." Skylar replied, slowly sitting up cross-legged.

Jeff immediately positioned himself on his knees behind Skylar on a corner of the blanket. Skylar handed me the unfinished daisy chain. "Hey, you wanna finish this? Oh, that feels good." She smiled back at Jeff as his hands kneaded her shoulder blades.

"Do you know what your assignment is for next session?" Jeff asked Skylar trying to make conversation.

"Yeah, I have the twelve and thirteen year olds. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna have to deal with those fucking C.I.T. brats like last session. They're too big."

"Hey, watch your language. There are still some kiddies around here." Barb cut in with her usual low monotone, half-kidding and half-serious.

Randy turned from throwing a Frisbee with David nearby and scowled at Skylar. His expression contradicted his usual approval of nonchalant vulgarity.

"Hey, what's wrong with the word 'Fuck' anyway?" Skylar queried.

Randy caught the Frisbee and came over to the blanket. He crouched down, his over sized jeans stretching, barely staying on his waist and exposing the hair, pinkish reserves of fat on his upper haunches. His greasy hair fell down over his eyes as he flipped the Frisbee onto the blanket and maneuvered his buttocks around. He plopped himself down next to Barb. He then swung his arm around to squeeze her waist on the far side. She winked at him subtly, then resumed her work on the lanyard.

"That's a cool word. 'Fuck' just means doing it. You know, in-ter-course." The last word rolled off Jeff's tongue by syllable while he raised his arms and hooked two fingers on each hand to signify quotes. "Nothing wrong with that." he stated matter-of-factly. "These guys know what I mean." He looked innocently at David, Lauren, and I.

David joined us immediately on the blanket. "What do you mean?" He was curious and so was I.

Lauren, being only six years old and barely able to write "I AM" on a

postcard, chimed in, "I never heard of that."

"Well, I've heard of it, but I don't know what it means." I tried to show worldliness.

David, though one year older than me, didn't appear to be any savvier. "I don't know either," he blurted, and then in his usual forthright and curious manner, he continued. "Well, what does it mean?" He glanced earnestly at Randy and Jeff.

Jeff looked around to Barb and Randy. "Should we tell 'em?"

Randy took the lead, impassively. "You know, it is when a guy puts his thing, well, you know his dick, his penis, into a woman's vagina and they, uh, have sex." Randy vaguely motioned toward some indiscriminate area between his legs.

"Oh! Who would do that?" David giggled. Then disgusted, he stuck his tongue out and winced.

I looked down at the blanket. "That's what I thought it was," I murmured while looking confused.

"Everybody does it. I mean grown-ups. The do it all the time. Come on, you know." Skylar paused. "Your parents do it, for example."

"What? No way." David vehemently objected. "They don't do that."

I jumped up. "They don't do that!"

Jeff sneered, "And how would you know?"

"Well, we've never seen them do it." David still looked disgusted. "Look, maybe other grownups do that, but not our parents." David was as irked as I was.

Lauren shyly added while looking confused, "Yeah, they don't."

Barb, pragmatic as ever, said, "Look, whether or not you've *seen* them, they do."

Jeff was all smiles now, clearly entertained, which made us more intent on convincing these four impetuous counselors that they were absolutely wrong.

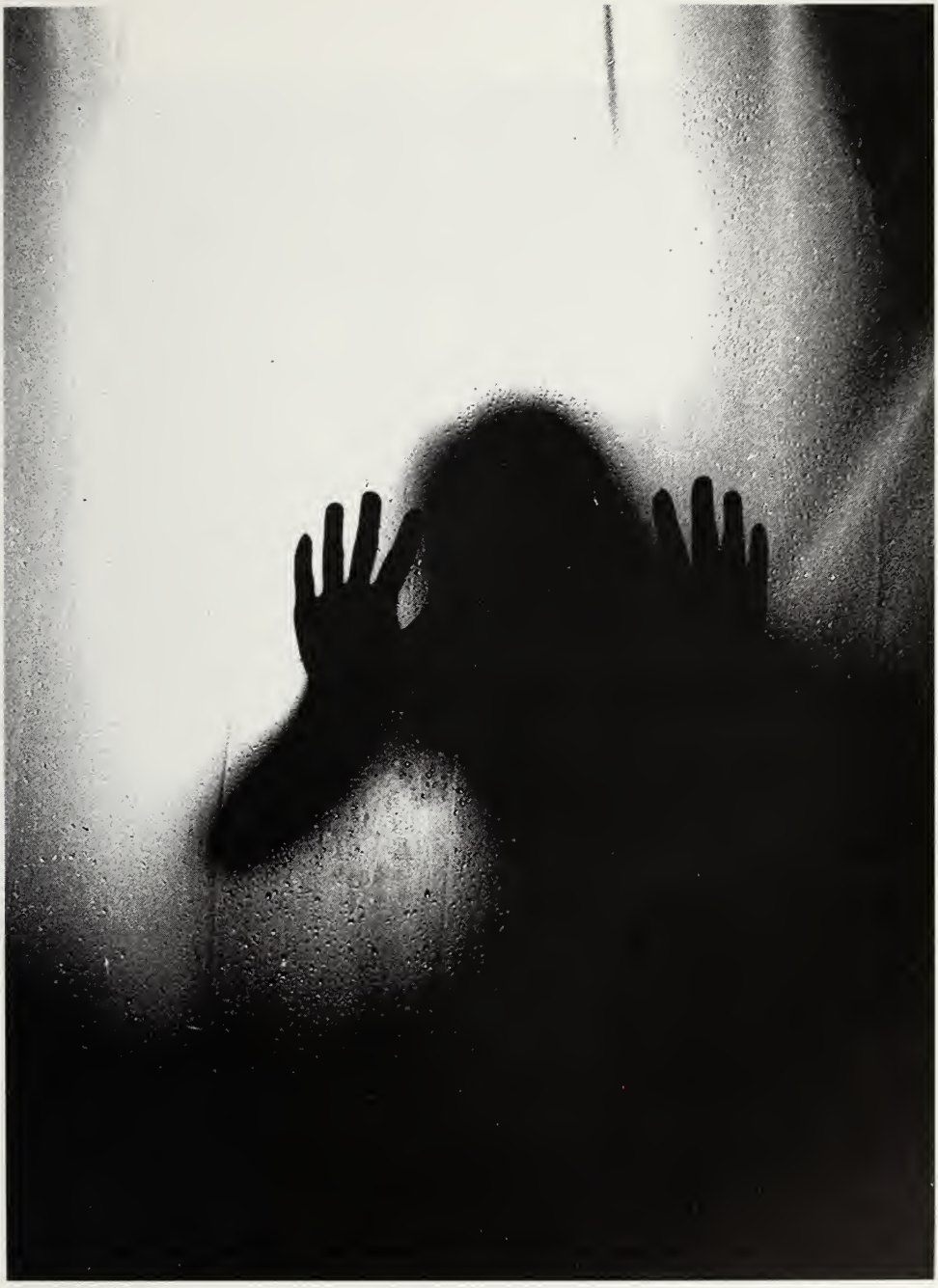
"No, our parents don't do, er, in-ter-course. They just don't."

This exchange went on for some time, with neither side willing to give in. There we were, firmly pitted against the stubborn counselors.

Finally, Randy said coolly, attempting to end the deadlock, "All right, then. Well, at least they've apparently done it three times."

The four counselors chuckled. David, Lauren, and I couldn't, for the life of us, fathom how they arrived at that number specifically, but we resigned ourselves to the compromise.

untitled No. 1
black and white photography
Naomi Yamano



untitled No. 2
black and white photography
Naomi Yamano

Night Time
black and white photography
Nobuko Iki

Linda Vanessa Hewitt

Nightshift

She crosses the threshold, assessing her patient
as she strides from fluorescent bright into shadows,
observing his tapped veins, belly swollen,
vital signs flashing numbers in the dark.
His wrist slack and heavy between her fingers;

they are joined, skin touching, young bones
and muscles cradling old ones.
They ignore a frenzied distant drumming,
a rogue machine, or a piece of roof
torn loose by the autumn storm.

The nurse's touch pushes her patient into a sea
of ancient memories, where the wind rises and falls,
fingers grab, falter, bits of life glisten, fade.
He falls into the moment when his daughter died,
in a place like this, on a wild night, in a time
so far away it seems like someone else's life.

He was in a different body then, holding his wife's hand,
panting with the child, trying to hold her from the edge
with his own breath.

Memory tugs again and tosses him into a boiling sea.
Foam billows through his shirt, burns his nostrils,
throws him against the monster's black side,
high enough to plunge hook into blowhole.

He awakens, his eyes wander on shadows,
he feels warm hands track the flagging currents
of his life.
Not pretty work, he says.
The nurse smiles, misunderstanding.
Our Lady of the Machine, she thinks.
Primitive work, he whispers, so brutal they paid
ten dollars a day for men who couldn't find
other work at forty cents an hour.
At night, they held us with tenderloin,
whiskey, picture shows.

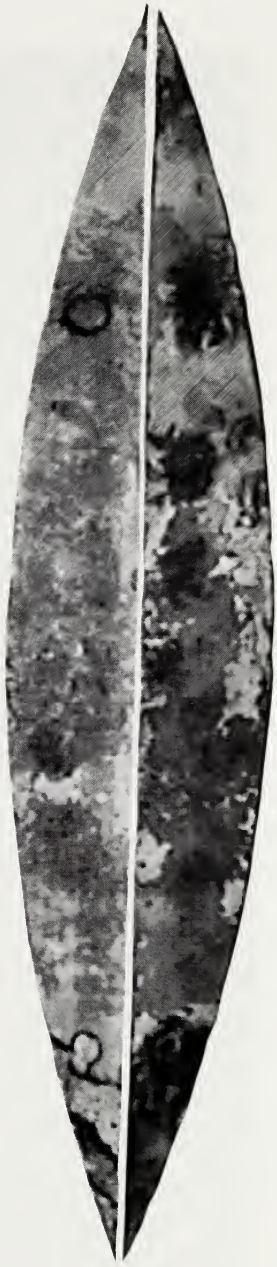
Fishermen? She reads numbers, adjusts lines.
No, not even proper whalemen at sea,
land bound whalers, we watched from shore,
hoping they'd strand on the bar before the tide turned.

Rough work, she says, frowning at a monitor.
No, hellacious, he insists. Their huge tails thumped
the sand all the while we stole the oil from their heads,
good for lubricating watches and tiny gears.

It's that sound I remember, he says, more than their eyes
moving back and forth, or the cutting, or the smell.
Children in the dunes stared,
their parents spread picnics on the sand.
We wouldn't do that now, the nurse thinks.

His heart rate is up and the nurse strokes
the glistening skin and bony ridges of his skull,
squeezes the hand that lies across his chest.

Sleep now, she whispers, moving away.
His eyelids twitch, he drifts upstream.



49.

luna de luna
printmaking
Phil Nerboso

50.

Emma
black and white photography
Justin Hughes

Evan Sicuranza

Glass

Melanie Henderson was the girl who thought she was a dog. Today we had a meeting in the afternoon about Melanie Henderson instead of science class. The teachers brought us to the cafeteria because the auditorium was closed because of rats. The rats were there because of Melanie Henderson but it wasn't her fault. It was Tommy Mason's fault.

What had happened was Tommy Mason had said that Melanie was a rat-catcher dog and had got the rats from Miss Bentley's classroom and put them in the auditorium after school and then he and Bobby Broil, who is really big and smells like chicken soup and kind of looks like a rat too, had locked Melanie Henderson in the auditorium and told her she couldn't come out until she ate the rats. It was Miss Bentley who had stayed late because it was Tuesday and on Tuesday she and Mr. Simmer the History teacher have secret meetings in the teacher lounge which they think no one knows about but once Annie Green said she saw them in the teacher lounge after school and Miss Bentley was in her underwear and so anyway, Miss Bentley was looking for her rats and found Tommy Mason and Bobby Broil, who actually also has greasy hair that looks like rat hair too, who were holding the auditorium doors shut and she heard Melanie Henderson inside sort of barking and crying at the same time I guess and she let Melanie out of the auditorium.

Tommy and Bobby got in trouble and didn't come to school the next day because they were suspended. They didn't come to school at all last week but two days ago they showed up on their bikes while we were at recess and they threw bottles at the jungle gym and Billy Johnson got a piece of glass in his eye. Now he is blind in that eye and he doesn't come to school anymore either.

Tommy and Bobby got away on their bikes and no one told on them because everyone was scared and I went home and felt bad because it felt like one of the bottles had got inside me and broke and all the glass pieces were floating around inside me and scraping me and they would never come out. The glass would cut me up and make me into jelly and rats would come and eat the jelly and I would die but I didn't tell anyone either.

So it was because of the rats that we had the meeting in the cafeteria, though the principal didn't talk about the rats and he didn't talk about Tommy

and Bobby or Billy Johnson and how he was blind in one eye but everyone knew about that anyway though we weren't supposed to. The cafeteria was cold and it was funny to be there without eating lunch. It was very clean and looked a lot bigger with all the empty red and green tables folded up and the chairs stacked against the wall. The lunch lady wasn't there and there were no lights behind the counter where she usually stood, it was dark and strange-looking back there and the metal trays that hold all the hot lunches were empty and stacked on the counter, shiny and scary. The floor was mostly empty and we sat on the tiles and they were cold. I had never looked at the floor before and it was white with green spots like lots of drips of green paint and it was shiny too. Everything was cold and shiny and looked brand new. Then I thought the drips on the floor looked like pieces of glass from broken bottles and I remembered the broken glass inside me and the rats and I was scared and moved across the floor to sit next to Sam who is my friend.

"Look outside the window," said Sam. I looked. Outside the window was the field for recess and Melanie Henderson was out there crawling on all fours and sniffing a tree.

"Do you think she really thinks she's a dog or is it just pretend?" Sam asked.

"She's crazy, my Mom says," said Ned Delaney who was sitting near us.

I didn't say anything. I don't care what Ned Delaney's mom thinks anyway. I looked at Melanie Henderson outside the window and then I looked at the dark, scary space behind the lunch counter and then I looked at the broken bottle pattern on the floor and I kept looking back and forth from Melanie to the lunch counter to the floor. Melanie, lunch counter, floor. Melanie lunch counter floor. Melanielunchcounterfloor. And then I felt like something was going to happen like maybe I would get sick or something worse, something terrible like walls breaking like glass and darkness like a blind eye but then the principal started talking and I looked at him and felt okay.

The principal was talking about Melanie. He said that Melanie was someone we all knew and cared about and that we didn't want to hurt her or make her feel bad because we all liked her. He said that he knew that some of us didn't understand Melanie very well and that because of that maybe some of us were a little afraid of her but that we liked her and that we all wanted to help her. Then he said he was going to introduce us to a friend of his named Dr. Fielding who is a child psychiatrist which is someone who is good at helping people who are like Melanie. Dr. Fielding said that Melanie was just like us except that she was sick and she needed our help to get better. He said that he knew that we all like to play at things sometimes and imagine that we are other things than what we are.

Ned Delaney said that Sam my friend likes to pretend he is a ballerina and it was a bad joke and Sam said for him to shut up and I was mad at Sam and Ned and I ignored them.

I was trying to look only at Dr. Fielding and not outside, not at the lunch counter, not at the floor. As long as I looked in front of me at Dr. Fielding I would be safe and I would understand that everything was okay. Dr. Fielding said that sometimes people who are very smart and good at imagining things can get caught up in imagining something and forget that it is imaginary and then it

seems to them that it is very real. They can get trapped in their imagination. Melanie was kind of like this. She was trapped in imagining she was a dog and though deep down she might know that it wasn't true she was trapped in thinking it was true.

"But why doesn't she just stop if it's all pretending?" said Anna Green, who was sitting in front of us and could never keep her mouth shut even when she was supposed to.

"Well," said Dr. Fielding, "It's more than just pretending. It might be that right now it seems better to Melanie to be a dog rather than a little girl."

Dr. Fielding kept talking and said that it was important for us not to make fun of Melanie and to try understand what things were like for her right now and to treat her with respect and not be afraid of her, but I stopped listening and just looked at him. He had big glasses with spots on them and an ugly face and an ugly mouth. I didn't like him. I knew he was lying. I knew he didn't understand Melanie any more than Ned Delaney who didn't understand anything at all. I knew Dr. Fielding thought Melanie was crazy and that she was wrong in thinking she was a dog. I knew he was wrong and dumb, because I knew about Melanie Henderson because I was in love with Melanie Henderson. And nothing was all right and nothing was okay.

Dr. Fielding stopped talking and in the silence I looked over to where Miss Bentley was standing and she was crying. I saw Mr. Simmer try to hold her hand, and I saw her push his hand away. I looked away and saw Melanie outside the window. She was rolling on the grass. Her legs dangled in the air and her blond hair was full of leaves. She was beautiful. Then I felt bad and I looked at the floor. Then I looked at the lunch counter and the black shadow hanging behind it. Then I looked at the floor and the green blotches were like sharp bits of glass jumping up to cut me and then I looked at Melanie and I felt afraid and I saw Melanie leap up and tense and start to snarl and bark and she ran away into the woods behind the recess field and I knew that that something bad was going to happen and it would be worse than getting sick. Then Tommy Mason and Bobby Broil rode up fast over the field on their bikes and threw something big at the cafeteria window and the window exploded like a wall of busted bottles and everyone one was screaming like rats screaming and inside me it was cutting glass and blind darkness blind like a broken eye.

Street Shot No. 1
black and white photography
Kate Sheridan

Together
black and white photography
Dewi Simanjuntak

Sarah Beaulieu

End of August

The crease on the map
where we met
still crosses that state,
but the August air has vanished.
There is just the road,
a ribbon on a package
that will never be opened.
Half-dressed summer stood apart
from the rest of the year.
A brief and wrenching rendezvous
before a brisk wind
brushed us away
like dozing bees
slapped from roses by frost.
One direction
takes vengeance on another,
and the routine way of home
escapes down
a shuttering path,
to the stuttering sea
breaking in a succession of coughs.
The oak has lost its shade,
yet its branches bend and reach
to remember the leaves—
Winter comes
and I bury you.

There'll Be Plenty Of Time To Be Depressed...When We're Dead
acrylic
Ben Merris

58.

Without Remorse, What Was Comfortable Has To Go
watercolor
Ben Merris

Error Begets More Trial
watercolor & ink
Ben Merris

Andrea No. 1
color photography
Azusa Okada

Artist Book Cover
mixed media
Justin Hughes

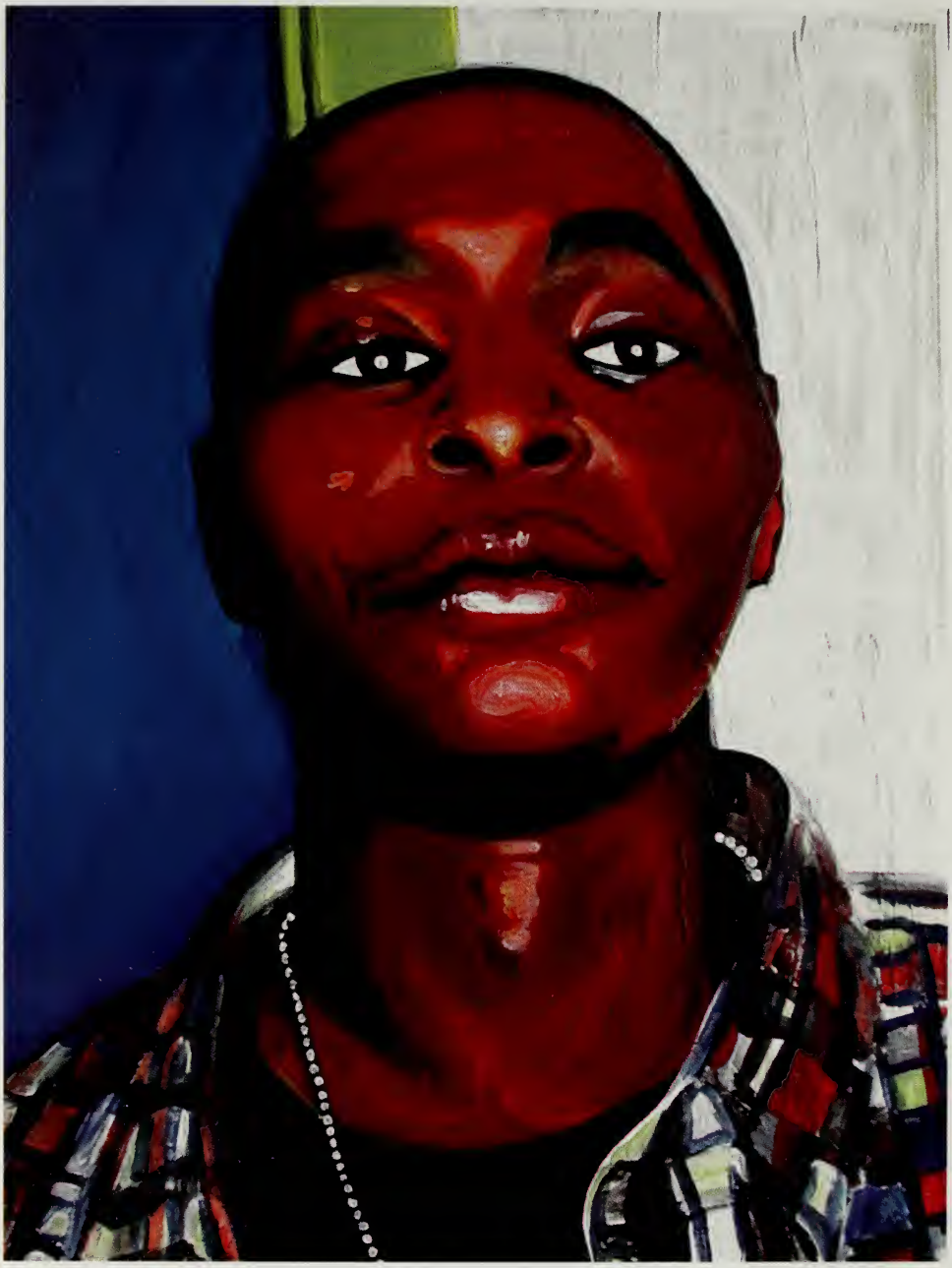
62.

All Weaved In
mixed media/digital imaging
Vienne Cheung

63.

Coffee Shop Chair
color photography
Kate Sheridan

64.



hugh.tiff
acrylic & collage
DS Mangus

Jessica Stover

"humorless meritocracy"

"humorless meritocracy"
seems to be stamped across
his forehead,
which distracts me
from listening to him
discuss,
project,
his thoughts on cannibalism.
I don't care about his ideas or the way
he pronounces his consonants.
I'd rather watch the way his arm muscles flex
as he gestures to make his point.
Nodding wordlessly,
I picture him,
on a bicycle,
swimming,
eating sushi,
and that thought makes me grin,
which only encourages
him to continue.

Sean Leonard

I's and E's

66.

Mr. Evans entered Doctor Milner's office with a newspaper and two empty coffee cans. He was a thin, owlish man with Coke-bottle glasses. His appearance was disheveled, as if he hadn't showered or changed clothes for a couple of weeks.

"Are you Mr. Evans?" the receptionist asked.

"Yes, yes," Mr. Evans replied.

"The doctor will see you in a few minutes. He's running a little late today."

Evans raised his hand and dismissed her. He had so much work and so little time. He sat down on the sofa and placed the two coffee cans on the small table in front of him. He opened one can and then the other. Then he opened his paper to the middle, folded it, and laid it down between the cans.

"There's a lot today," he said looking at the paper.

"Excuse me," the receptionist said.

He didn't reply. He just reached into his pocket and pulled out an X-acto knife. It looked like a fountain pen, but had a small retractable blade in the end. He began cutting squares out of the newspaper. Tiny little squares. He'd cut one side, then the second one, then the top and then finally, the bottom. When the tiny square of paper was free, he'd poke the knife into its center and pull it loose. Then he dropped the piece of paper into one of the coffee cans. He had it down to a science. Cut, cut, cut, cut, poke, drop. First side, second side, top, bottom, poke and drop. He could do fifty squares a minute, but was always pushing for more. Next week he might get that number up to sixty or seventy.

The receptionist watched him closely, but never let on that she was watching him. Doctor Milner always told her to watch the patients and to notify him of any peculiar tendencies. She felt that Mr. Evans was exceptionally peculiar.

Evans, having finished his paper, folded it up and placed it on the table. Except for the holes, it was ready for the next person to come along and read it.

Evans picked up a *Sports Illustrated* magazine from the pile of reading materials left for the patients to peruse. He then opened it to the first page and began cutting more squares.

The receptionist would have said something, except Doctor Milner had told her never to interfere with the patients. She was not to be confrontational or judgmental. She should be friendly but not sympathetic. Emotionally disturbed people were just as ill as someone with cancer or diabetes and should be treated with polite respect.

Evans heard some movement inside the room to his left and figured he had maybe one minute, forty-three seconds—maybe even as much as two minutes, twenty-five seconds. He unconsciously quickened his pace. The more he finished now, the less he'd have to do later.

The door to the examination room opened and Doctor Milner followed a middle-aged woman into the waiting room. "Goodbye, Mrs. Green. I hope we'll see you again next week."

"Thank you, Doctor." She then turned her attention toward the receptionist. "Do I owe you anything?"

The receptionist looked down into a book. "Have you changed insurance companies?"

"No."

"Then you're all set."

"Thank you," she repeated, and left the office.

Evans heard the door close, but continued to cut. He did until they called his name.

The doctor whispered something to his secretary, made some notations in a folder and then handed it to her. He picked up the next folder and read it to himself. "Mr. Evans?" he said to the man seated in his waiting room.

"Yes." Mr. Evans looked up. The doctor was a white-haired man of about fifty. He wore glasses and sported a moustache. His whole appearance displayed trust. He looked like a man you could tell anything to.

The doctor extended his hand and Evans had to stand up to shake it. "Hello, Doctor."

The doctor then held out his arm in the direction of the examination room. Evans bent down and began putting the covers on his cans.

"You can leave your things here if you like. They'll be perfectly safe."

Evans picked them up along with the magazine he had been working on. "If it's all the same to you, doctor, I'd like to keep them with me. Maybe if I get a moment or two...you know."

"I understand...may I call you Tom?" the doctor asked closing the door to the room.

"Sure," Evans replied. He looked around the room. It was all very comforting. The walls were wood-paneled and hung with gentle seascapes. The doctor's desk was at one end. At the other was a number of chairs, all of which were placed at different distances from the doctor's own. Evans picked one at a round table and put his things down on it. The doctor sat in a chair opposite and placed the file down between them.

"Do you mind if I do a little work, while we talk?" Evans asked.

"No. Go right ahead," the doctor replied. "What brings you here today?"

"I haven't been getting any sleep. I have so much work."

"What kind of work do you do?"

"Oh, no. I don't have a job, if that's what you mean. No. My work." He held the magazine up for the doctor to see. The page was mostly text and had numerous holes in it.

"What are you doing, there?" the doctor asked.

"I'm cutting out all the I's and E's."

"Why?"

"There are so many bad words with I's and E's. By cutting out the I's and E's, I can get rid of the words. Imagine a world without *evil* and *sin*."

"I'm not sure I understand you."

"Let me have a piece of paper and a pencil and I'll show you." The doctor handed him a small pad of paper and a pencil. Evans wrote down the word "EVIL." Then he removed the X-acto knife from his pocket and cut out the letters E and I. What remained was V L. "VL. Doesn't make any sense now. See what I mean?"

The doctor nodded. "But how can you get rid of the words by cutting out the letters in magazines?"

"Oh, I do more than just magazines. I do newspapers, books, pamphlets, posters, anything with I's and E's. If I do enough, people won't see those words, and eventually they'll forget about them. Out of sight, out of mind."

"I see. But there are so many books and magazines, why just newspapers alone would..."

"I can cut an average of fifty letters per minute. A good sized novel has between sixty and a hundred thousand words. Less than half of which have I's and E's. I can do a novel in less than two days. One if I don't sleep. And some words have two letters right next to each other. Like *leer* and *peek*."

"But what about the good words? Like *love*?"

"The e in love is silent. L-O-V is still love, or if you like—it could be spelled L-U-V. It's still the same."

The doctor considered a moment. "But what about words whose meanings would change entirely without the letters. Everything *silly* would become S-L-L-Y, slly." He pronounced it "sly."

"But you'd still have other words like *crazy* or *funny*, that mean the same thing as *silly*."

"Why? What good would it do to get rid of these words?"

"Imagine it. A world where people can't *steal*. The best they could do is *stall*. People couldn't *fail*, they could only *fall*." Evans looked down at his magazine. "Damn, look at all the time I've wasted." He began cutting again.

The doctor made some notes in the file and then asked, "Are you married? Do you have a girlfriend?"

"My wife died last December," he said.

The doctor scribbled the word "DIE" on the back of an insurance form. Then he drew a line through the I and the E. All that was left was the D. He imagined, for a moment, a world in which no one he loved could die. Then he asked, "Do you want to tell me about her?"

69.

Moment
black and white photography
Nobuko Iki

70.

Sky
black and white photography
Nobuko Iki

Paul L. Kerstein

The Other Side of the Street

"Ari! Ari!" Mrs. Brooks labored up the stairs, her heavy, thick-heeled shoes stamping on the wooden steps. "Ari, are you ready for breakfast? I hope you're not spying on that Rabinowitz girl again!"

"Don't come in Mama! I'll be ready in five minutes." Ari jumped across his small room, quickly stashing the binoculars in his dresser. His infatuation with Amy was getting him into trouble.

His mother boomed outside his door. "Hurry, Ari! You must eat your breakfast and not be late for school."

"Okay, Mama! I'm coming." Ari went back to the window, closed the blinds, and finished dressing. He sat on the bed to collect his thoughts and to stop his hands from shaking before he joined his family for breakfast. He felt like a criminal.

Mrs. Brooks stamped back downstairs, clutching the banister to balance her heavy frame. How could she show her face in public if everyone at the Orthodox shul found out that he was interested in a Reform Jewish girl? She wouldn't be able to sit with the other women in the balcony any more. They'd have to build a third section—one for bad mothers who couldn't keep their sons from marrying non-observant Jewish girls.

Moments later, Ari entered the kitchen and slid silently into his chair at the kitchen table.

"You're a speedy dresser." Mrs. Brooks said with her back to the table, as she battered some eggs.

Ari squeaked back, "I know how to dress myself."

"Oh, now you can dress with the speed of lightning? And last week, you were the smartest man on earth, doing your homework so quickly. Were you watching Amy Rabinowitz across the street again?" The skin on her upper arms shook and waddled as she continued beating the eggs.

"Spying on that girl across the street again, Ari?" His father asked as he walked into the kitchen reading the paper.

Ari buried his face in his hands. Mr. Brooks continued addressing his son from behind his paper as he sat down. He was the voice of authority from behind

the old values of *The Yiddish Forward*.

"How many times have we told you about Amy and her family?" He asked.

"I don't know," Ari replied.

"More than you can count, I'd be willing to bet. And what have we told you?" He questioned from behind the news.

Ari started to squirm in his chair, wondering what was taking the eggs so long. A pair of enlarged eyes appeared behind the glasses frame above the paper.

"Well?" his father urged.

"Answer his question," his mother yelled from the sink with her back to him. She began frying the scrambled eggs.

Ari sighed. "She'll be nothing but trouble." He rested his chin on his hands. His bony elbows propped him up.

"That's right," his father agreed. A bobbing yarmelkeh was the only thing Ari could see that proved that it was not the paper that was talking to him. The eggs and toast were finally served. His father continued. "Do you think we're punishing you by not letting you associate with this Rabinowitz girl? You don't think we don't want you hanging around with her for no reason, do you?"

"Well, no. But..."

"But nothing," his father quickly countered. "Yes, she may be very pretty and nice, but you are a Bar Mitzvah now. You have to set an example." His father had pulled half of the paper aside, and was looking at him from behind thick black glasses.

"Yes, Papa," Ari humbly replied. It was no use arguing. The conversation would just go around in circles till he agreed, or was grounded.

When the final bell at the Yeshiva rang, Ari raced out of school and down the street to the public high school. He arrived by the front walkway and leaned on an old maple tree by the sidewalk and waited for the final bell. And for Amy.

"Hi, Ari. What did you learn in Talmud today?" she said with a wide smile as she came down the last set of steps from school. Her friends said their goodbyes and walked off across the street to the elevated train platform.

"No Talmud today, Amy. Please." he said, putting his hand up.

"What's the matter?" she asked, slightly alarmed at his tone as they started walking home. Her jeans and white T-shirt contrasted with his formal black suit.

"Oh, it's my parents again."

Amy immediately became indignant. "They're not telling you how evil I am again, are they? Satan's whore?" A woman passing by gave them a dirty glance as she overheard the last part of their conversation.

He smiled at her use of exaggeration. "Oh the usual," he said. "The propagation of Judaism rests in my loins," he finished, mimicking his father's powerful voice.

Amy laughed. "I love how you turn everything around like that. Why can't your parents understand?"

"It's not that," he started. Waving his hands with emphasis. "They understand perfectly. It's that they don't want to, if that makes any sense."

"Then look to the Torah," Amy burst out. "Just like your father does."

"Are you kidding?" he replied astonished. "Argue Torah with my father, the most respected scholar at my shul? Even the rabbi seeks his knowledge."

"Seems he missed a few important people." she gloated.

"Okay, Who?" he asked, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Names Sarah and Tzipporah ring a bell?"

"Sarah and Tzipporah," he mumbled to himself, and then his eyes brightened. He grabbed her by the arm, stopping her on the sidewalk. "Not Jewish!"

"Exactly. They were right there with Abraham and Moses through it all. The gals behind the men." Amy gave him a nudge on the shoulder and ran the rest of the way home as Ari watched her.

That evening, Amy and her mother were coming out of their house for a walk and some ice cream. It was almost dark and some stars could barely be made out. It was a warm evening, with the slightest hint of a breeze.

"Oh look, Mom. There's Ari. In the window." Amy pointed across the street.

"Poor boy," her mother answered. "Always stuck inside studying. Such a shame."

"What's a shame? He's very smart." She said looking up at her mother.

Mrs. Rabinowitz smiled sympathetically. "It's a shame because those people keep that poor boy locked in that house all the time. Always watching life go by with those binoculars of his. He'll never know from outside his books and the synagogue, as the world passes him by."

"But what about tradition, Mom?" she asked as they continued to walk to the end of the block.

"It's all a myth, if you ask me. Throughout history, Judaism has progressed whether those people want to believe that or not. We may be the same in some ways, but at least we're progressing," she sighed as they rounded the corner towards the ice cream parlor. "Do yourself a favor. There's so much out there for a girl like you. Don't get mixed up with a boy, and people, like that."

"Spare a minute from your homework?" Mr. Brooks asked, surprising Ari at his desk. Ari swung around in his chair wide eyed. "Oh, sorry. Didn't mean to scare you."

"It's okay." Ari took a deep breath. "It's only math homework."

His father pulled on his thick gray wiry beard, studying his son who looked up at him. Ari reminded him of himself when he was that age, always trying to integrate his tradition to give life in America more Jewish meaning. He sat on the side of Ari's bed. "Your mother told me she saw you walking home with the Rabinowitz girl again."

Ari grunted in disgust and looked at the strands of shag in his forest green carpet. "Look, Papa. I..."

His father raised his hand, cutting off Ari's plea. "I was reading Hillel today," he started. "You remember that famous story of him having to teach some critic the Torah while standing on one leg?"

Ari smiled, nodding his head as he remembered. It was one of his favorite

anecdotes.

"You remember what he said Ari?" his father asked.

"Do unto others as you would want done unto you. The rest is just commentary. Now go study," Ari said and broke into a wide grin.

His father put a hand on his son's knobby knee in an unusual show of affection. "I'll always be afraid for you. But ultimately, it's you who must be allowed to discover things for yourself."

"Thank you, Papa," Ari called behind him as he raced out of his room leaving his father sitting on the bed.

Ari ran across the street to Amy's house. He straightened out his shirt and rang the doorbell.

A tall burly man with thinning hair answered the door. He was wearing faded blue work pants with a white v-neck T-shirt that allowed his thick chest hair to stick out. He looked down at Ari.

"You're that boy from across the street," he said, surprised to see Ari at this front door. "What do you want?" he asked suspiciously.

Ari stared up at Mr. Rabinowitz's large frame and asked if Amy was around. Could he talk to her?

"Look here boy," Mr. Rabinowitz said. "She's not home. As far as you're concerned, she's never home. Got it? Go find yourself one of those nice girls from your temple." He slammed the door in Ari's face.

Times Square
black and white photography
Nobuko Iki

Michele Lisio

An Art More Lovely

76.

You ask me to ignite the tempered spark
That makes a man draw sonnets from his lips.
Suppose sarcastic smiles had moved Petrarch,
And an embattled face had launched Greek ships.
Then grind my jealous fits to tint my eyes
And use my ugly moods to shade my hair,
Brave tones to show all that I wish to hide,
My scarlet choler pinked by their compare.
O, know I'm not amused by poets' praise,
Though your words' worth may paint a fairer view.
How could your artist find a Muse ablaze
In this dark portrait that I pose for you?
    Let temperas from my temper's palette be:
    Men with a temperate Muse paint poetry.

Marguerite No. 2
black and white photography
Kate Sheridan

78.

Brenda
black and white photography
Azusa Okada

Evan Sicuranza

The Ordinary

She's peeling an onion, outside to inside
And the archangel and the pig have tears in their eyes
As the world winds itself around a core of air
And the man in the trenchcoat gives her a meaningful stare
Then he takes off his hat and as the smoke pours out
She thinks, there is nothing out of the ordinary here.

"There is nothing out of the ordinary here,"
she says and calls her little boy inside.
He is small and wet, and like a lamp with the light put out
It is as if he has nothing in his eyes.
They are like lead glass, he does nothing but stare
And he shivers though there is no cold to the air.

The man in the trenchcoat flickers in the air
"There is nothing out of the ordinary here,"
he tells the child, matching him stare for stare.
He opens up his coat and invites the boy inside.
The archangel and the pig avert their eyes
As the boy climbs in and never comes back out

The woman looks up from her onion, "Will you please put that out,"
She says, pointing to the hat which still smokes, now clouding the air
Then she throws down her knife and rubbing her eyes
Shouts, "There is nothing out of the ordinary here.
Now where is that boy? I told him to come inside.
And you, in the trenchcoat, I don't like your stare."

The archangel and the pig just snicker and stare.
Says the man in the trenchcoat, "What is the difference, in or out?
Besides he has come in, trust me, he is inside."
An authoritative silence falls upon the air
as if to say, "There is nothing out of the ordinary here."
The woman closes her eyes.

As she falls to the floor, the world has no eyes.
The onion alone, still unpeeled, seems to stare.
"Let's go. There is nothing out of the ordinary here"
Says the pig to the archangel who has already gone out.
The man in the trenchcoat flies off in the air
Which leaves the pig alone inside.

He stares at the woman's body and the lights go out.
Inside the darkness, with tears in his eyes, he sings to the air:
"There is nothing out of the ordinary here."

81.

untitled
black and white photography
Megan Pesch

Erica Monteiro

Black and Tan Blues

That place was pretty damned dark. On sunny afternoons the slats of light faded into thin wisps before intermingling with the dust on the floor inside, but when it was cloudy or rainy, it was just damn dark. Because I love wood, natural wood—with no paint or tint to hide the grain underneath, the joint was real comforting.

I used to go to the land of low light, after work, staying into the night and watching the shift changes. Carpenters and painters would roll through, creating connections for their next gigs, and the young professionals trickled in later. My shift ended at 3:00 p.m., so I'd usually get there at around 3:15, five days a week.

There were two 'tenders that worked the place. The one I liked was tall and balding—a real jovial type. He threw out drunks if they offended other patrons, and made phone calls to all the other local spots to make sure they were cut off there as well. He was all right, but the other 'tender was not. A real sly thing, he always had an underhanded dig to dish out.

It was an evening when he was on shift that the incident happened. I had had a stressful day at work, and was in need of spirits to relax away the tension. There were still young Blue Collars hangin' around. I'd overheard one of them saying he was waiting for his parents, flying in from the motherland.

I was reading when he spotted them outside the window. He opened the door for his mom, who kissed him. Then she proceeded to bustle herself and her broken-in husband through the front entrance. Because there was no room at the bar for a group, the entire crew sat behind my stool at one of the last empty tables with the deep wooden benches, and they all began exchanging stories from home.

I went back to reading, and looked up in time to see a pretty chick walking towards me. She asked if the stool next to mine was free, and since she seemed cool, I smiled and started scanning the door for my man. When I caught a glimpse of him I waved, and he pushed his way through the crowd, brushing by individuals who shouted greetings in his direction.

When he reached me, we kissed and talked about our sucky days at work. In my peripheral vision, I noticed that the chick next to me was reading too, a magazine, real solitary like, burying her face beneath falling sheaths of brown hair. I also saw that she was alone, which was unusual for a woman in this joint

at this time of night.

I had pretty much forgotten about the kid and his crew behind me, until his pops, now pleasantly plastered, climbed backwards over the bench to take pictures. He fiddled with the buttons and then fired off a flash of light, sealing that moment in infamy for me. I didn't think I had really heard the words that emanated from his loosened lips, before the picture. Magazine Girl was looking into my questioning face with embarrasment. *Yes he did just say that.*

Mr. Picture had just bellowed, "Smiiille...Say Niiigger!"

I was stunned, though I didn't know how to react at first. My mind just kinda wandered back to the countless times I'd heard that word, the stories of my Pops in front of the one black and white, watching the black dude in black face dance his jig across the TV screen, and the Caribbean jewels of my twin friends Donna and Linda who had never even been inside a dental office. Perfect gum to tooth ratios.

When my mind stopped racing, I sensed my man behind me. So I told him I was okay and that if I wanted to say something, I would like to do so by myself. He smiled when I got up from the stool and I asked him to watch my back. The girl just whispered, "Good luck." I guess she realized that my show would be a flop.

When I approached the father, now nursing a ginger ale to cool his tongue, he kinda acted as though he didn't see me. I shouted my question over the pulsing vibrations, the clinking glasses on the rattling table, and to the speaker above the fishtank. "Excuse me Sir, did you just say 'Smile, say Nigger?'"

He just looked at me. Dumbfounded. Though his wife wouldn't look at me at all. She'd started spinning the coaster that she'd written all her personal information on (for the Guiness competition), speechless for the first time that night. I stood waiting for a response.

"I said knickers, not Niggers. Everyone in Dublin wears 'em...Did you mistunderstand me?"

Yeah, I thought. *I misunderstood. I wanted you to say you're sorry, even if it was only because my face with the pretty smile had heard.* But my outburst was taken the wrong way apparently, because pops had the nerve to offer to buy me a drink. I returned to my seat without giving him an answer, and he left soon after, getting a hit upside his head with his wife's pocketbook for ruining her good time. She didn't mention mine.

I sat back down and the girl introduced herself. "I'm Katriona, and I'm sorry that you had to deal with that." Her accent was real melodic and I smiled at her candidness. I told her I was sorry for thinking she'd be a bolter, heading to the closest free space—farthest away from me and my man. She just looked at me quizzically and turned toward the 'tender, who was finding it difficult to keep his arms from shaking as he poured out two Black and Tans.

"This is for you," she said, reaching to the grate to where our drinks were foaming over. She must have realized that homeboy, who'd walked to the other end of the counter, had no intention of returning to serve. "Whoo," she whistled, "I feel like I'm in the belly of the beast." Now it was my turn to look at her quizzically.

The two of us wound up talking until closing that night. I saw that the

magazine she'd been reading was *Essence*, and she volunteered that she was trying to figure out what to tell her four year old daughter...ya' know, for the future. I told her that I didn't know, but that I was glad she wasn't as fake as the ultras who'd say in a heartbeat, "I don't see color," while hugging their purses close to their chests. We'd both got a laugh out of that. Instead we chatted about my mom and her disappearing act, and her Emerald Isle. We exchanged numbers before last call and agreed to meet for Alvin Ailey so she could see my Niggaz (sans alcohol), and she said she'd bring her daughter. So we parted with plans.

After that, my man and I walked quietly home and made the kind of love that would have had Evil 'Tender putting a gun to his head, and the picture taking parents catching the quickest Aer Lingus back to their island. White slapping on black, black slapping on white, till we collapsed in spent frenzy, and the night faded into morning.

I saw the kid about a week later. We were both walking down Main Street, headed towards each other. Steps away from the pub. When he noticed me, he kinda did this shuffling thing with his feet. So I stopped.

"I'm really sorry about what my parents said the other night," he spoke in his pretty accent. Then he started again, "I mean there's really no excuse...I am sorry." He kept switching his five gallon paint bucket, filled with tools, from one hand to the other.

It was awkward, so I asked, "Why should you feel so sorry for something that you didn't do. I mean, damn. If I had to pay for the sins of my parent's, I'd be a dead mothafucka' right about now." There was a pause, then a hesitant smile crossed his lips and I patted his shoulder, telling him to treat himself better. He just shook my hand and went into the pub. I did not.

I don't chill in there anymore. The wood that I used to find so comforting reminds me of a picture I have posted under the "Colored Only" sign, hanging from my bathroom wall. It's not a picture really, but a diagram, displaying the way some of my ancestors were packed into dark wooden places, where no light filtered through. Ever.

Now when I want my preferred drink, I head to the local L.Q., pick up a six of *Guinness* and *Bass*, invite Katriona over, and sit on my front steps.

We watch her daughter playing with my neighbors...we laugh about our friendship...and spill our hearts out over our Black and Tan brews.

Boxing Gloves
charcoal
Mari Seki

Eagle in the Stream
black and white photography
Arthur Gorham

George Boley

Squirrel Gumbo

I grew up in the swamps. Where people drop out of high school when they turn sixteen. The girls get pregnant and the boys go to work as fishermen. Some people finish high school, but as soon as they graduate they get married to get out of their parents' house. If you don't want to be a fisherman, you can get on at the plant. There are a number of chemical plants along the river. A lot of pets get rare forms of cancer. Kids too. But we're all gonna die anyway.

Girls marry the guy down the street. They get a little piece of land and put a trailer on it. They see their parents almost everyday. They worry that their husbands will get laid off. Everybody has a car, a pickup truck, a couple of boats and a few old, broken down cars sprawled around their yard.

Deerheads and mounted fish welcome you. When my dad finally killed a deer good enough to mount, I begged him to do it with its tongue hanging out. Just like it was when it was lying on the kitchen floor. All the way to the taxidermist, I insisted that he leave the tongue, knowing he wouldn't. When we picked it up, its mouth was closed, all perfect and manicured, looking at us with glass eyeballs. I guess a deerhead is meant to be a trophy, not an accurate moment of death.

My mother's specialty is squirrel gumbo. My grandfather always said she makes the best squirrel gumbo. When my dad came back from hunting he would always have squirrel tails for us to play with. We would hold them up as mustaches. I loved the wild animal smell, the softness of the fur—the chance to pet a squirrel, even though it was just the tail.

On the Fourth of July, we always had a crawfish boil. We would play with the crawfish while waiting for the water to boil; you boil them alive. When it's time to eat, they dump the hot crawfish on a picnic table covered in newspaper. You break off the tail, take out the meat and suck the head. Pile the empty carcasses next to you. One time I was at a friend's crawfish boil. She accidentally knocked over my Coke. Her mother was always yelling at her about being clumsy, so as punishment she had to give her Coke to me and have nothing to drink. That was serious punishment because eating crawfish makes you really thirsty.

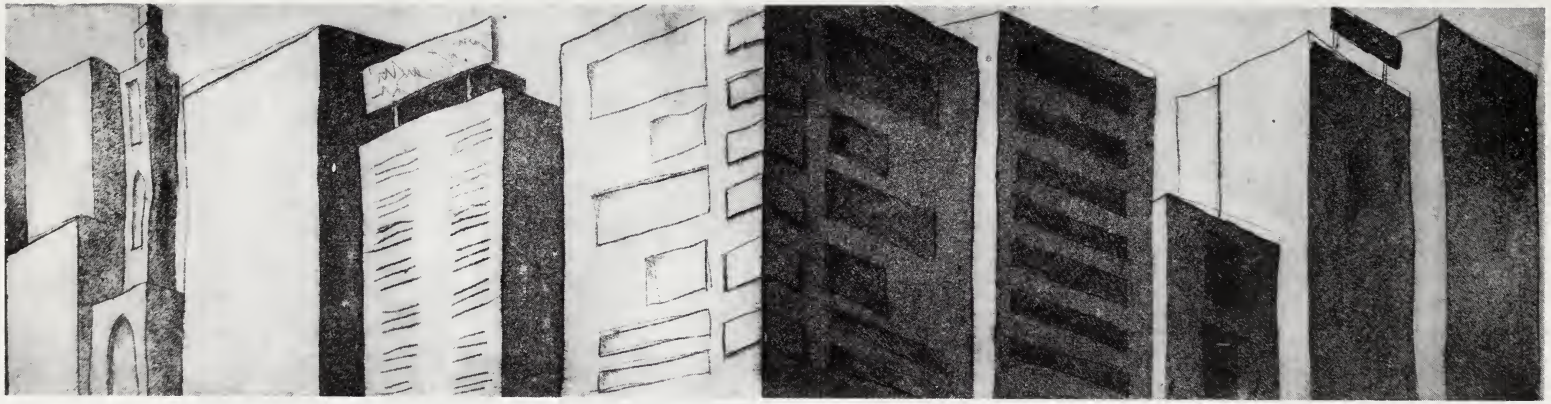
We swam in the bayou with alligators, empty milk bottles, dirty diapers and beer cans. My neighbor used to swear that he could lure alligators to the bank

with a ham sandwich. We always wanted to get the alligators to come out of the water and reveal themselves; that was how you got to see how big they were. When it rained all the boys played in the ditch with their crude toy boats that their fathers made. After a flood, they would fish off the porch. When a hurricane came, everybody worried that the levee wouldn't hold. All our dads would go out in the rain to sandbag it. It never gave out. If it had, we would have lost everything.

I liked to watch my father skin fish. He always looked in their stomachs to see what they were eating so he would know what to use for bait. I liked to see what he might find. It was my job to carry the fish guts to dump in the bayou. I was scared and thrilled by the danger of falling in as I swung the heavy bucket toward the water. Sometimes the alligators came to eat it.

In the summer it was hot. The sun beats down and the air hangs on you. My mother always said she got a tan every time she walked down the driveway to check the mail. One time my parents kicked us out of the house while they were fighting because my mother bought spicy sausage instead of mild. "Well, Jeanette, if you took your head out of your ass once in a while, you'd have seen that it said spicy right there on the package." It was so hot that day. Eventually, I fell off the swing and went inside crying, effectively ending our exile.

Nobody ever leaves Des Allemands. You just don't. Maybe you move to Raceland or Thibodeaux, or even as far as Mississippi if you have family there. Nobody just picks up and moves far away for no reason. But I did.



untitled
printmaking
Bernadette McHugh

90.

Photo Vingette 1934
black and white photography
unknown, courtesy of Carmella Roy Kearsley

Carmella Roy Kearsley

Basilico and Bocci

The Bocci court in the backyard of my Grandfather's house,
surrounded by basil plants, is busy on Sunday mornings.
Italian patriarchs in black-vested serge suits and black
felt hats, smoking corncob pipes or Parodi cigars,
arrive for the game. Their native Abbruzzi and easy laughter,
clacking Bocci balls and riotous competition
swirl in the air through the bouquet of *Basilico*.

Indoors, women chop garlic and parsley fine.
Under the umbrella tree in the front yard, a picture is snapped:
a little girl, white cotton ruffles hiding under the laces
of her brown leather high-tops, sits on top of a ladder—
her father stands behind, on a rung.

Carmella Roy Kearsley

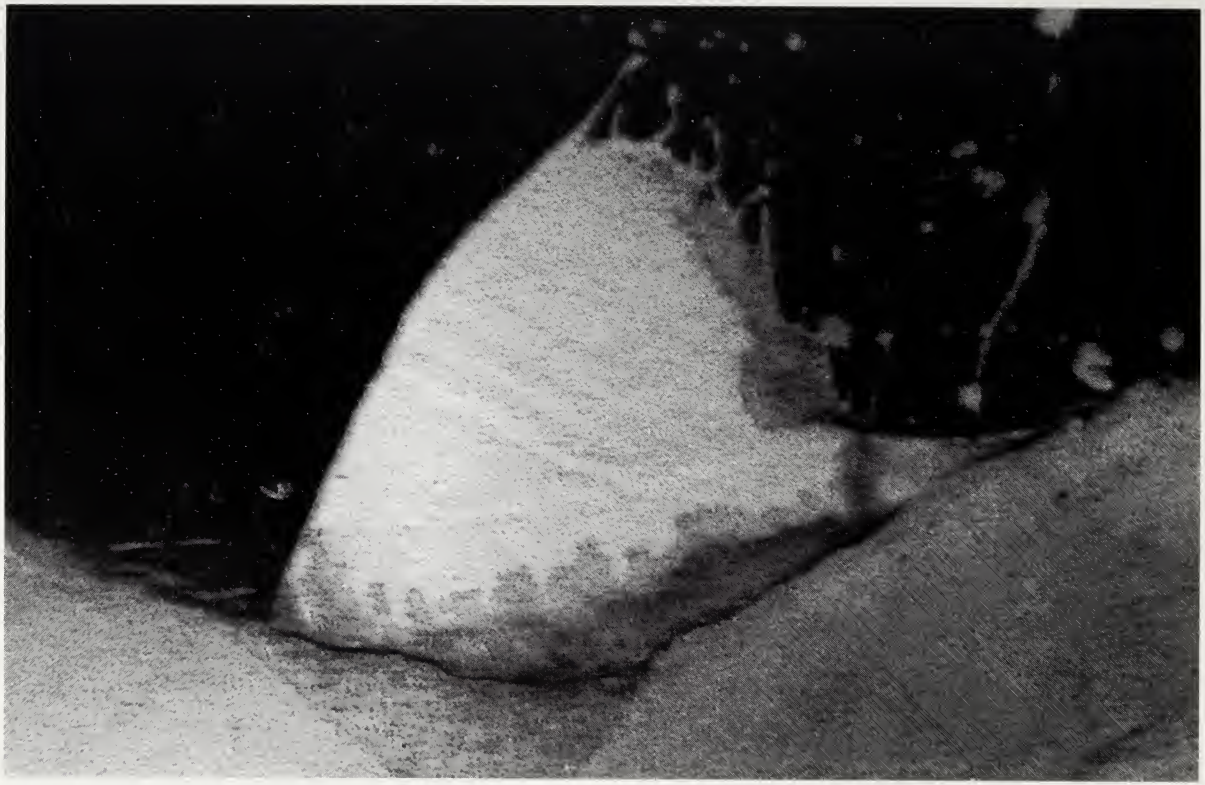
Beets

I slide dark red rough flesh from fresh-cooked
beets at 2:30 on a sleepless morning,
and watch their blood red juice rush
over my hands, remembering

sixteen knife wounds in your back.
I was dressing when you came home after
being mugged in Boston
each one looking like a slot in a
piggy bank and how I try to push back the
blood into each slot

and blood soaking the bed sheets
while the town nurse, inserting
a catheter,
cuts your urethra and
blood pees from your penis

—I wash my hands.



untitled
black and white photography
Arthur Gorham

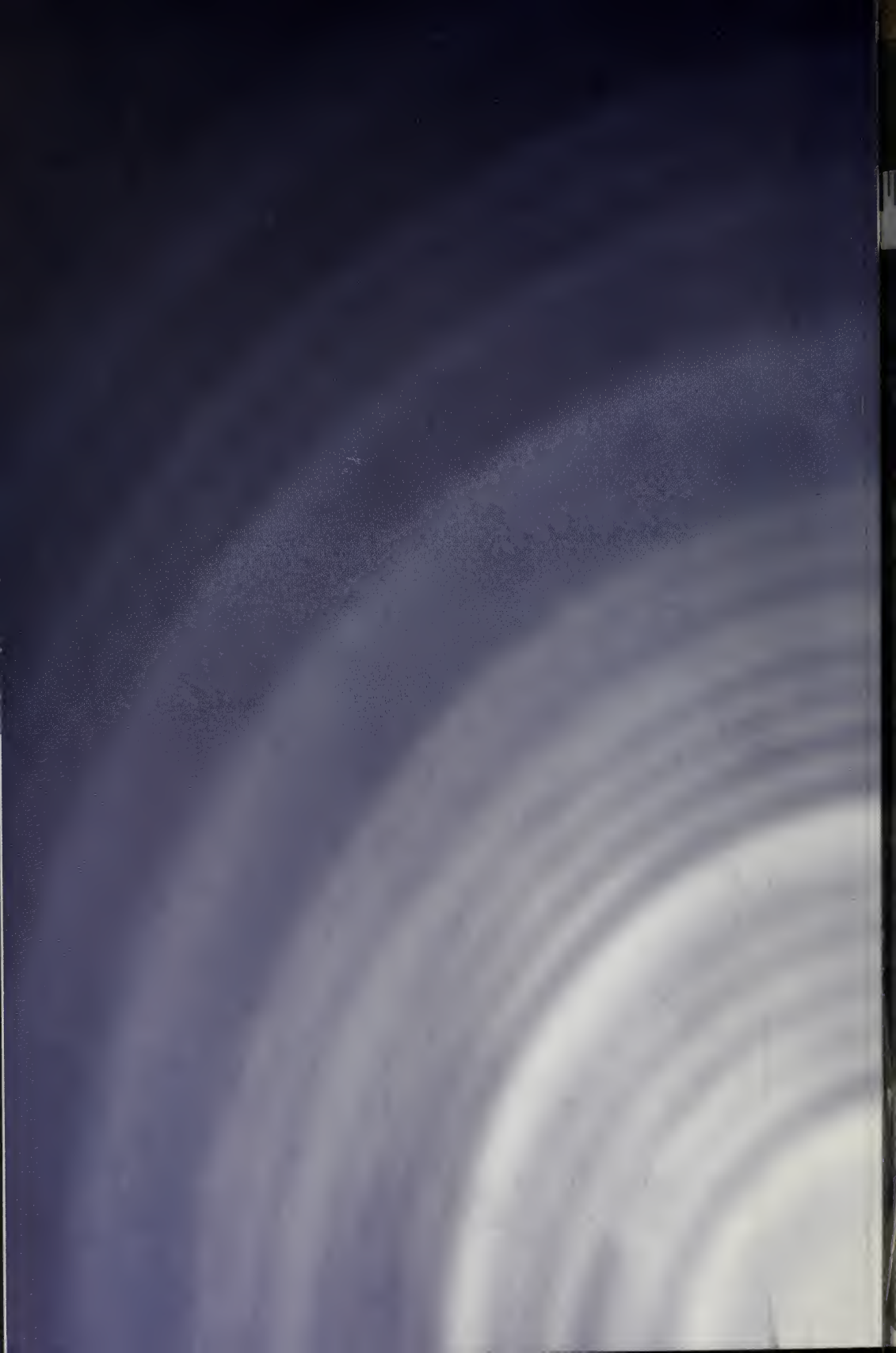
Evan Sicuranza

Like a Man in a Glass Overcoat

I turn the light off at ten and undress.
Without your eyes to tell me I am naked
I must sleep in the sly confinement
of chimerical clothes.

I no longer trust my skin. I finger
my nipples to see if they are cold buttons
that will open my ribcage in long, bent stems
like the tulips you left on the dresser.

My body will not break its shape
to the darkness. Without your hands
to unstitch the seams, it remains a tight bodice
binding my thoughts. I am heavily knit.

Tomorrow I will wake
with a heart as impossible as a bow tie,
needing your hands to finish the knot
as I pull at my skin, feeling poorly tailored.

Bio-terrorism
black and white photography
Laura Sabounjian